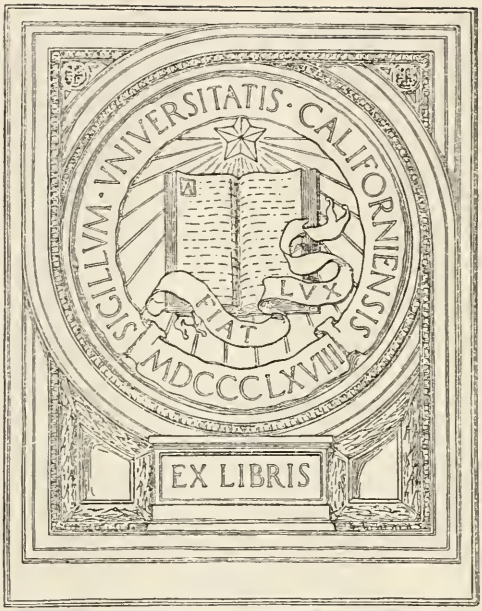
THE MOTOR MAID

C N & A M WILLIAMSON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THE MOTOR MAID

BOOKS BY

C. N. AND A. M. WILLIAMSON

LORD LOVELAND DISCOVERS AMERICA
SET IN SILVER
THE LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR
THE PRINCESS PASSES
MY FRIEND THE CHAUFFEUR
LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER
ROSEMARY IN SEARCH OF A FATHER
THE PRINCESS VIRGINIA
THE CAR OF DESTINY
THE CHAPERON

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"We raced along a clear road, the Etang shimmering blue before us"

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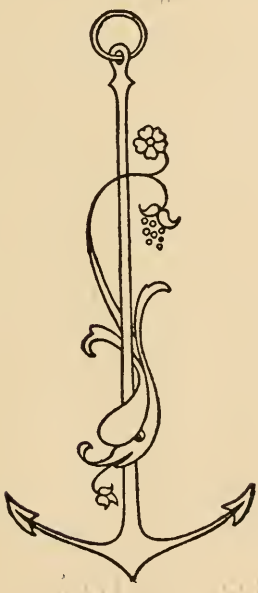

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TO THE
THREE GERTRUDES

91992

ILLUSTRATIONS

"We raced along a clear road, the Etang shimmering blue before us" . . . *Frontispiece*

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"While I wrestled . . . with a bodice as snug as the head of a drum, the lord of all it contained appeared in the doorway" . . . 48

"It took half an hour to dig the car out, and push her up from the hollow where the snow lay thickest" 272

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THE MOTOR MAID

CHAPTER I

ONE hears of people whose hair turned white in a single night. Last night I thought mine was turning. I had a crëepy feeling in the roots, which seemed to crawl all the way down inside each separate hair, wriggling as it went. I suppose you could n't have nervous prostration of the hair? I worried dreadfully, it kept on so long; and my hair is so fair it would be almost a temptation for it, in an emergency, to take the one short step from gold to silver. I did n't dare switch on the light in the *wagon-lit* and peep at my pocket-book mirror (which reflects one's features in sections of a square inch, giving the survey of one's whole face quite a panorama effect) for fear I might wake up the Bull Dog.

I 've spelt him with capitals, after mature deliberation, because it would be nothing less than *lèse majesté* to fob him off with little letters about the size of his two lower eye-tusks, or chin-molars, or whatever one ought to call them.

He was on the floor, you see, keeping guard over his mistress's shoes; and he might have been misguided enough to think I had designs on them — though what I could have used them for, unless I 'd been going to Venice and wanting a private team of gondolas, I can't imagine.

I being in the upper berth, you might (if you had n't seen

him) have fancied me safe; but already he had once padded half-way up the step-ladder, and sniffed at me speculatively, as if I were a piece of meat on the top shelf of a larder; and if half-way up, why not all the way up? *Il était capable du tout.*

I tried to distract my mind and focus it hard on other things, as Christian Scientists tell you to do when you have a pin sticking into your body for which *les convenances* forbid you to make an exhaustive search.

I lay on my back with my eyes shut, trying not to hear any of the sounds in the *wagon-lit* (and they were not confined to the snoring of His Majesty), thinking desperately. "I will concentrate all my mentality," said I to myself, "on thoughts beginning with P, for instance. My Past. Paris. Pamela."

Just for a few minutes it was comparatively easy. "Dear Past!" I sighed, with a great sigh which for divers reasons I was sure could n't be heard beyond my own berth. (And though I try always even to *think* in English, I find sometimes that the words group themselves in my head in the old patterns — according to French idioms.) "Dear Past, how thou wert kind and sweet! How it is brutalizing to turn my back upon thee and thy charms forever!"

"Oh, my goodness, I shall certainly die!" squeaked a voice in the berth underneath; and then there was a sound of wallowing.

She (my stable-companion, shall I call her?) had been giving vent to all sorts of strange noises at intervals, for a long time, so that it would have been hopeless to try and drown my sorrows in sleep.

Away went the Gentle Past with a bump, as if it had knocked against a snag in the current of my thoughts.

Paris or Pamela instead, then! or both together, since they seem inseparable, even when Pamela is at her most American, and tells me to "talk United States."

It was all natural to think of Pamela, because it was she who gave me the ticket for the *train de luxe*, and my berth in the *wagon-lit*. It it had n't been for Pamela I should at this moment have been crawling slowly, cheaply, down Riviera-ward in a second-class train, sitting bolt upright in a second-class carriage with smudges on my nose, while perhaps some second-class child shed jammy crumbs on my frock, and its second-class baby sister howled.

"Oh, why did I leave my peaceful home?" wailed the lady in the lower berth.

Heaven alone (unless it were the dog) knew why she had, and knew how heartily I wished she had n't. A good thing Cerberus was on guard, or I might have dropped a pillow accidentally on her head!

Just then I was n't thanking Pamela for her generosity. The second-class baby's mamma would have given it a bottle to keep it still; but there was nothing I could give the fat old lady; and she had already resorted to the bottle (something in the way of patent medicine) without any good result. Yet, *was* there nothing I could give her?

"Oh, I 'm dying, I *know* I 'm dying, and nobody cares! I shall choke to death!" she gurgled.

It was too much. I could stand it and the terrible atmosphere no longer. I suppose, if I had been an early Christian martyr, waiting for my turn to be devoured

might have so got on my nerves eventually that I would have thrown myself into the arena out of sheer spite at the lions, and then tried my best to disagree with them.

Anyway, Bull Dog or no Bull Dog, having made a light, I slid down from my berth — no thanks to the step-ladder — dangled a few wild seconds in the air, and then offering — yes, offering my stockinged feet to the Minotaur, I poked my head into the lower berth.

"What are you going to do?" gasped its occupant, *la grosse femme* whose fault it would be if my hair did change from the gold of a louis to the silver of a mere franc.

"You say you 're stifling," I reminded her, politely but firmly, and my tone was like the lull before a storm.

"Yes, but ——" We were staring into each other's eyes, and — could I believe my sense of touch, or was it mercifully blunted? It seemed that the monster on the floor was gently licking my toes with a tongue like a huge slice of pink ham, instead of chewing them to the bone. But there are creatures which do that to their victims, I 've heard, by way of making it easier to swallow them, later.

"You also said no one cared," I went on, courageously. "*I* care — for myself as well as for you. As for what I 'm going to do — I 'm going to do several things. First, open the window, and then — *then I 'm going to undress you.*"

"You must be mad!" gasped the lady, who was English. Oh, but more English than any one else I ever saw in my life.

"Not yet," said I, as I darted at the thick blind she had drawn down over the window, and let it fly up with a snap. I then opened the window itself, a few inches, and in floated a perfumed breath of the soft April air for which our bereaved lungs had been longing. The breeze fluttered round my head like a benediction until I felt that the ebbing tide of gold had turned, and was flowing into my back hair again.

"No wonder you 're dying, madam," I exclaimed, switching the heat-lever to "Froid." "So was I, but being merely an Upper Berth, with no rights, I was suffering in silence. I watched you turn the heat full on, and shut the window tight. I saw you go to bed in *all* your clothes, which looked terribly thick, and cover yourself up with both your blankets; but I said nothing, because you were a Lower Berth, and older than I am. I thought maybe you *wanted* a Turkish Bath. But since you don't — I 'll try and save you from apoplexy, if it is n't too late."

I fumbled with brooches and buttons, with hooks and eyes. It was even worse than I 'd supposed. The creature's conception of a travelling costume *en route* for the South of France consisted of a heavy tweed dress, two gray knitted stay-bodices, one pink Jaeger chemise, and a couple of red flannel petticoats. My investigations went no further; but, encouraged in my rescue work by spasmodic gestures on the part of the patient, and forbearance on the part of the dog, I removed several superfluous layers of wool. One blanket went to the floor, where it was accepted in the light of a gift by His Majesty, and the other was returned to its owner.

"Now are you better, madam?" I asked, panting with

long and well-earned breaths. She reposed on an elbow, gazing up at me as at a surgeon who has performed a painful but successful operation; and she was an object *pour faire rire,* the poor lady!

She wore an old-fashioned false front of hair, "sunning over with curls" (brown ones, of a brown never seen on land or sea), and a pair of spectacles, pushed up in an absent-minded moment, were entangled in its waves. Her face, which was large, with a knot of tiny features in the middle, shone red with heat and excitement. She would have had the look of an elderly child, if it had n't been for her bright, shrewd little eyes, which twinkled observantly — and might sparkle with temper. Nobody who was not rich and important would dare to dress as badly as she did. Altogether she was a figure of fun. Indeed, I could n't help feeling what quaint mantelpiece ornaments she and her dog would make. Yet, for some reason, I did n't feel inclined to laugh, and I eyed her as solemnly as she eyed me. As for His Majesty, I began to see that I had misunderstood him. After all, he had never, from the first, regarded me as an eatable.

"Yes, I *am* better," replied His Majesty's mistress. "People have always told me it came on treacherously cold at night in France, so I prepared accordingly. I suppose I ought to thank you. In fact, I do thank you."

"I acted for myself as much as for you," I confessed. "It was so hot, and you were suffering out loud."

"I have never travelled at night before," the lady defended herself. "Indeed, I 've made a point of travelling as little as possible, except by carriage. I don't

consider trains a means of conveyance for gentlefolk. They seem well enough for cattle who may not mind being herded together."

"Or for dogs," I suggested.

"Nothing is too good for Beau — my *only* Beau!" (at this I did not wonder). "But I would n't have moved without him. He 's as necessary to me as my conscience. I was afraid the guard was going to make a fuss about him, which would have been awkward, as I can't speak a word of French, or any other silly language into which Latin has degenerated. But luckily English gold does n't need to be translated."

"It loses in translation," said I, amused. I sat down on my bag as I spoke, and timorously invited Beau (never was name less appropriate) to be patted. He arose from the blanket and accepted my overtures with an expression which may have been intended for a smile, or a threat of the most appalling character. I have seen such legs as his on old-fashioned silver teapots; and the crook in his tail would have made it useful as a door-knocker.

"I don't think I ever saw him take so to a stranger," exclaimed his mistress, suddenly beaming.

"I wonder you risked him with me in such close quarters then," said I. "Would n't it have been safer if you 'd had your maid in the compartment with you——"

"My maid? My tyrant!" snorted the old lady. "She 's the one creature on earth I am afraid of, and she knows it. When we got to Dover, and she saw the Channel wobbling about a little, she said it was a great nasty wet thing, and she would n't go on it. When I

insisted, she showed symptoms of seasickness; and in consequence she is waiting for me in Dover till I finish the business that 's taking me to Italy. I had no more experience than she, but I had *courage*. It 's perhaps a question of class. Servants consider only themselves. You, too, I see, have courage. I was inclined to think poorly of you when you first came in, and to wish I 'd been extravagant enough to take the two beds for myself, because I thought you were afraid of Beau. Yet now you 're patting him."

"I *was* rather afraid at first," I admitted. "I never met an English bull dog socially before."

"They 're more angels than dogs. Their one interest in life is love — for their friends; and they would n't hurt a fly."

"Larger game would be more in their way, I should think," said I. "But I 'm glad he likes me. I like to be liked. It makes me feel more at home in life."

"H'm! That 's a funny idea!" remarked the old lady. " 'At home in life!' You 've made yourself pretty well at home in this *wagon-lit*, anyhow, taking off all your clothes and putting on your nightgown. I should never have thought of that. It seems hardly decent. Suppose we should be killed."

"Most people do try to die in their nightgowns, when you come to think of it," said I.

"Well, you have a quaint way of putting things. There 's something very original about you, my dear young woman. I thought you were mysterious at first, but I believe it 's only the effect of originality."

"I don't know which I 'd rather be," I said, "original

or mysterious, if I could n't afford both. But I 'm not a young woman."

"Goodness!" exclaimed the old lady, wrinkling up her eyes to stare at me. "I may be pretty blind, but it *can't* be make-up."

I laughed. "I mean *je suis jeune fille.* I 'm not a young woman. I 'm a young girl."

"Dear me, is there any difference?"

"There is in France."

"I 'm not surprised at queer ideas in France, or any other foreign country, where I 've always understood that *anything* may happen. Why can't everybody be English? It would be so much more simple. But you 're not French, are you?"

"Half of me is."

"And what 's the other half, if I may ask?"

"American. My father was French, my mother American."

"No wonder you don't always feel at home in life, divided up like that!" she chuckled. "It must be so upsetting."

"Everything is upsetting with me lately," I said.

"With me too, if it comes to that — or would be, if it were n't for Beau. What a pity you have n't got a Beau, my dear."

I smiled, because (in the Americanized sense of the word) I had one, and was running away from him as fast as I could. But the thought of Monsieur Charretier as a "beau" made me want to giggle hysterically.

"You say 'was,' when you speak of your father and mother," went on the old lady, with childlike curiosity,

which I was encouraging by not going back to bed. "Does that mean that you 've lost them?"

"Yes," I said.

"And lately?"

"My father died when I was sixteen, my mother left me two years ago."

"You don't look more than nineteen now."

"I 'm nearly twenty-one."

"Well, I don't mean to catechize you, though one certainly must get friendly — or the other way — I suppose, penned up in a place like this all night. And you 've really been very kind to me. Although you 're a pretty girl, as you must know, I did n't think at first I was going to like you so much."

"And I did n't you," I retorted, laughing, because I really did begin to like the queer old lady now, and was glad I had n't dropped a pillow on her head.

"That 's right. Be frank. I like frankness. Do you know, I believe you and I would get on very well together if our acquaintance was going to be continued? If Beau approves of a person, I let myself go."

"You use him as if he were a barometer."

"There you are again, with your funny ideas! I shall remember that one, and bring it out as if it were my *own*. I consider myself quite lucky to have got you for a travelling companion. It 's such a comfort to hear English again, and talk it, after having to converse by gesture — except with Beau. I hope you 're going on to Italy?"

"No. I 'm getting off at Cannes."

"I 'm sorry. But I suppose you 're glad?"

"Not particularly," said I.

"I 've always heard that Cannes was gay."

"It won't be for me."

"Your relations there don't go out much?"

"I 've no relations in Cannes. Are n't you tired now, and would n't you like me to make you a little more comfortable?"

"Does that mean that *you 're* tired of answering questions? I have n't meant to be rude."

"You have n't been," I assured her. "You 're very kind to take an interest."

"Well, then, I 'm *not* tired, and I *would n't* like to be made more comfortable. I 'm very well as I am. Do you want to go to sleep?"

"I want to, but I know I can't. I 'm getting hungry. Are you?"

"Getting? I 've *got*. If Simpkins were here I 'd have her make us tea, in my tea-basket."

"I 'll make it if you like," I volunteered.

"A French — a half French — girl make tea?"

"It 's the American half that knows how."

"You look too ornamental to be useful. But you can try."

I did try, and succeeded. It was rather fun, and never did tea taste so delicious. There were biscuits to go with it, which Beau shared; and I do wish that people (other people) were obliged to make faces when they eat, such as Beau has to make, because if so, one could add a new interest to life by inviting even the worst bores to dinner.

I was fascinated with his contortions, and I did not attempt to conceal my sudden change of opinion con-

cerning Beau as a companion. When I had humbly invited him to drink out of my saucer, which I held from high tide to low, I saw that my conquest of his mistress was complete. Already we had exchanged names, as well as some confidences. I knew that she was Miss Paget, and she knew that I was Lys d'Angely; but after the tea-drinking episode she became doubly friendly.

She told me that, owing to an unforeseen circumstance (partly, even largely, connected with Beau) which had caused a great upheaval in her life, she had now not a human being belonging to her, except her maid Simpkins, of whom she would like to get rid if only she knew how.

"Talk of the Old Man of the Sea!" she sighed. "*He* was an afternoon caller compared with Simpkins. She 's been on my back for twenty years. I suppose she will be for another twenty, unless I slam the door of the family vault in her face."

"Could n't Beau help you?" I asked.

"Even Beau is powerless against her. She has hypnotized him with marrow bones."

"You 've escaped from her for the present," I suggested. "She 's on the other side of the Channel. Now is your time to be bold."

"Ah, but I can't stop out of England for ever, and I tell you she 's waiting for me at Dover. A relative (a very eccentric one, and quite different from the rest of us, or he would n't have made his home abroad) has left me a house in Italy, some sort of old castle, I believe — *so* unsuitable! I 'm going over to see about selling it for I 've no one to trust but myself, owing to the circumstances of which I spoke. I want to get back as soon as

possible — I hope in a few weeks, though how I shall manage without any Italian, heaven may know — I don't! Do you speak it?"

"A little."

"Well, I wish I could have you with me. You 'd make a splendid companion for an old woman like me: young, good to look at, energetic (or you would n't be travelling about alone), brave (conquered your fear of Beau), accomplished (three languages, and goodness knows what besides!), presence of mind (the way you whisked my clothes off), handy (I never tasted better tea) — altogether you sum up ideally. What a pity you 're rich, and out of the market!"

"If I look rich my appearance must be more distinguished than I supposed — and it 's also very deceiving," said I.

"You 're rich enough to travel for pleasure in *wagon-lits*, and have silver-fitted bags."

"I 'm not travelling for pleasure. You exaggerate my bags and my *wagon-lits*, for I 've only one of each; and both were given me by a friend who was at the Convent with me."

"The Convent! Good heavens! are you an escaping nun?"

I laughed. "I went to school at a Convent. That was when I thought I *was* going to be rich — at least, rich enough to be like other girls. And if I *am* 'escaping' from something, it is n't from the arms of religion."

"If you 're not rich, and are n't going to relatives, why not take an engagement with me? Come, I 'm in earnest. I always make up my mind suddenly, if it 's anything

important, and hardly ever regret it. I 'm sure we should suit. You 've got no nonsense about you."

"Oh yes I have, lots!" I broke in. "That 's all I have left — that, and my sense of humour. But seriously, you 're very kind — to take me on faith like this — especially when you began by thinking me mysterious. I 'd accept thankfully, only — I 'm engaged already."

"To be married, I suppose you mean?"

"Thank heaven, no! To a Princess."

"Dear me, one would think you were a man hater!"

"So I am, a *one*-man hater. What Simpkins is to you, that man is to me. And that 's why I 'm on my way to Cannes to be the companion of the Princess Boriskoff, who 's said to be rather deaf and very quick-tempered, as well as elderly and a great invalid. She sheds her paid companions as a tree sheds its leaves in winter. I hear that Europe is strewn with them."

"Nice prospect for you!"

"Is n't it? But beggars must n't be choosers."

"You don't look much like a beggar."

"Because I can make my own dresses and hats — and nightgowns."

"Well, if your Princess sheds you, let me know, and you may live yet to deliver me from Simpkins. I feel you 'd be equal to it! My address is — but I 'll give you a card." And, burrowing under her pillow, she unearthed a fat handbag from which, after some fumbling, she presented me with a visiting-card, enamelled in an old-fashioned way. I read: "Miss Paget, 34A Eaton Square. Broomlands House, Surrey."

"Now you 're not to lose that," she impressed upon

me. "Write if you 're scattered over Europe by this Russian (I never did believe much in Princesses, excepting, of course, our *own* dear Royalties), or if you ever come to England. Even if it 's years from now, I assure you Beau and I won't have forgotten you. As for your address ——"

"I have n't any," I said. "At present I 'm depending on the Princess for one. She 's at the Hotel Majestic Palace, Cannes; but from what my friend Pam — the Comtesse de Nesle — says, I fancy she does n't stop long in any town. It was the Comtesse de Nesle who got me the place. She 's the only one who knows where I 'm going, because — after a fashion, I 'm running away to be the Princess's companion."

"Running away from the Man?"

"Yes; also from my relatives who 're sure it 's my duty to be *his* companion. So you see I can't give you their address. I 've ceased to have any right to it. And now I really think I *had* better go back to bed."

CHAPTER II

AT HALF-PAST ten this morning we parted, the best of friends, and I dropped a good-bye kiss into the deep black gorge between the promontories of Beau's velvet forehead and plush nose.

We 'd had breakfast together, Miss Paget and I, to say nothing of the dog, and I felt rather cheerful. Of course I dreaded the Princess; but I always did like adventures, and it appeared to me distinctly an adventure to be a companion, even in misery. Besides, it was nice to have come away from Monsieur Charretier, and to feel that not only did he not know where I was, but that he was n't likely to find out. Poor me! I little guessed what an adventure on a grand scale I was in for. Already this morning seems a long time ago; a year at the Convent used to seem shorter.

I drove up to the hotel in the omnibus which was at the station, and asked at the office for the Princess Boriskoff. I said that I was Mademoiselle d'Angely, and would they please send word to the Princess, because she was expecting me.

It was a young assistant manager who received me, and he gave me a very queer, startled sort of look when I said this, as if I were a suspicious person, and he did n't quite know whether it would be better to answer me or call for help.

"I have n't made a mistake, have I?" I asked, beginning to be anxious. "This *is* the hotel where the Princess is staying, is n't it?"

"She was staying here," the youth admitted. "But ——"

"Has she *gone?*"

"Not exactly."

"She must be either here or gone."

Again he regarded me with suspicion, as if he did not agree with my statement.

"Are you a relative of the Princess?" he inquired.

"No, I 'm engaged to be her companion."

"Oh! If that is all! But perhaps, in any case, it will be better to wait for the manager. He will be here presently. I do not like to take the responsibility."

"The responsibility of what?" I persisted, my heart beginning to feel like a patter of rain on a tin roof.

"Of telling you what has happened."

"If something has happened, I can't wait to hear it. I must know at once," I said, with visions of all sorts of horrid things: that the Princess had decided not to have a companion, and was going to disown me; that my cousin Madame Milvaine had somehow found out everything; that Monsieur Charretier had got on my track, and was here in advance waiting to pounce upon me.

"It is a thing which we do not want to have talked about in the hotel," the young man hesitated.

"I assure you I won't talk to any one. I don't know any one to talk to."

"It is very distressing, but the Princess Boriskoff died about four o'clock this morning, of heart failure."

"Oh!". . . I could not get out another word.

"These things are not liked in hotels, even when not contagious."

The assistant manager looked gloomily at me, as if I might be held responsible for the inconvenient event; but still I could not speak.

"Especially in the high season. It is being kept secret. That is the custom. In some days, or less, it will leak out, but not till the Princess has — been removed. You will kindly not mention it, mademoiselle. This is very bad for us."

No, I would kindly not mention it, but it was worse for me than for them. The Hotel Majestic Palace looked rich; very, very rich. It had heaps of splendid mirrors and curtains, and imitation Louis XVI. sofas, and everything that a hotel needs to make it happy and successful, while I had nothing in the world except what I stood up in, one fitted bag, one small box, and thirty-two francs. I did n't quite see, at first sight, what I was to do; but neither did the assistant manager see what that had to do with him.

Once I knew a girl who was an actress, and on tour in the country she nearly drowned herself one day. When the star heard of it, he said: "How *should* we have played to-night if you 'd been dead — without an understudy, too?"

At this moment I knew just how the girl must have felt when the star said that.

"I — I think I must stay here a day or two, until I can — arrange things," I managed to stammer. "Have you a small single room disengaged?"

"We have one or two small north rooms which are usually occupied by valets and maids," the young man informed me. "They are twelve francs a day."

"I 'll take one," I replied. And then I added anxiously: "Have any relatives of the Princess come?"

"None have come; and certainly none will come, as it would now be too late. Her death was very sudden. The Princess's maid knows what to do. She is an elderly woman, experienced. The suite occupied by Her Highness will be free to-morrow."

"Oh! And had she no friends here?"

"I do not think the Princess was a lady who made friends. She was very proud and considered herself above other people. Would you like to see your room, mademoiselle? I will send some one to take you up to it. It will be on the top floor."

I was in a mood not to care if it had been on the roof, or in the cellar. I hardly knew where I was going, as a few minutes later a still younger youth piloted me across a large square hall toward a lift; but I was vaguely conscious that a good many smart-looking people were sitting or standing about, and that they glanced at me as I went by. I hoped dimly that I did n't appear conspicuously pale and stricken.

Just in front of the lift door a tall woman was talking to a little man. There was an instant of delay while my guide and I waited for them to move, and before they realized that we were waiting.

"They say the poor thing is no worse than yesterday, however, my maid tells me ——" The lady had begun in a low, mysterious tone, but broke off

suddenly when it dawned upon her that she was obstructing the way.

I knew instinctively *who* was the subject of the whispered conversation, and I could n't help fixing my eyes almost appealingly on the tall woman; for though she was middle-aged and not pretty, her voice was so nice and she looked so kind that I felt a longing to have her for a friend. She had probably been acquainted with Princess Boriskoff, I said to myself, or she would not be talking of her now, with bated breath, as a "poor thing."

Evidently the lady had been waiting for the lift to come down, for when my guide rang and it descended she took a step forward, giving a friendly little nod to her companion, and saying, "Well, I must go. I feel sure it 's *true* about her."

Then, instead of sailing ahead of me into the lift, as she had a perfect right to do, being much older and far more important than I, and the first comer as well, she hesitated with a pleasant half smile, as much as to say, "You 're a stranger. I give up my right to you."

"Oh, please!" I said, stepping aside to let her pass, which she did, making room for me to sit down beside her on the narrow plush-covered seat. But I did n't care to sit. I was so crushed, it seemed that, if once I sat down I should n't have courage to rise up again and wrestle with the difficulties of life.

The lady got out on the second floor, throwing back a kindly glance, as if she took a little interest in me, and wanted me to know it. I suppose it must have been because I was tired and nervous after a whole night without sleep that the shock I 'd just received was

too much for me. Anyway, that kind glance made a lump rise in my throat, and the lump forced tears into my eyes. I looked down instantly, so that she should n't see them and think me an idiot, but I was afraid she did.

The young man who was taking me up to the top floor, and treating me rather nonchalantly because I was a North Roomer and a Twelve Francer, waved the lift boy aside to open the door himself for the lady; so that I knew she must be considered a person worth conciliating.

Shut up in my ten-by-six-foot room, I tried to compose myself and make plans; but to make plans on thirty-two francs, when you 've no home, and would be far from it even if you had one; when you 've nobody to help you, and would n't want to ask them if you had — is about as hard as to play the piano brilliantly without ever having taken a lesson. With Princess Boriskoff dead, with Pamela de Nesle sailing for New York to-morrow morning, and no other intimate friends rich enough to do anything for me, even if they were willing to help me fly in the face of Providence and Madame Milvaine, it did seem (as Pamela herself would say) as though I were rather "up against it."

The thought of Miss Paget suddenly jumped into my head, and the wish that, somehow, I had kept her up my sleeve as a last resort, in case she really were in earnest about her offer. But she had n't told me where she was going in Italy, and it would be of no use writing to one of her English addresses, as I could n't stop on where I was, waiting for an answer.

Altogether things were very bad with me.

After I had sat down and thought for a while, I rang,

and asked for the housekeeper. A hint or two revealed that she was aware of what had happened, and, explaining that I was to have been Princess Boriskoff's companion, I said that I must see the Princess's maid. She must come to my room. I must have a talk with her.

Presently, after an interval which may have been meant to emphasize her dignity, appeared a pale, small Russian woman whose withered face was as tragic and remote from the warmth of daily life as that of the eldest Fate.

She could speak French, and we talked together. Yes, her mistress had died very suddenly, but she and the doctors had always known that it might happen so, at any moment. It was hard for me, but — what would you? Life was hard. It might have been that I would have found life hard with Her Highness. What was to be, would be. I must write to my friends. It was not in her power to do anything for me. Her Highness had left no instructions. These things happened. Well! one made the best of them. There was nothing more to say.

So we said nothing more, and the woman moved away silently, as if to funeral music, to prepare for her journey to Russia. I — went down to luncheon.

One always does go down to luncheon while one is still inclined to keep up appearances before oneself; but the restaurant was large and terribly magnificent, with a violent rose-coloured carpet, and curtains which made me, in my frightened pallor, with my pale yellow hair and my gray travelling dress, feel like a poor little underground celery-stalk flung into a sunlit strawberry-bed, amid a great humming of bees.

The vast rosy sea was thickly dotted with many small

table-islands that glittered appetizingly with silver and glass; but I could not have afforded to acknowledge an appetite even if I 'd had one.

My conversation with the Russian woman had made me rather late. Most of the islands were inhabited, and as I was piloted past them by a haughty head waiter I heard people talking about golf, tennis, croquet, bridge, reminding me that I was in a place devoted to the pursuit of pleasure.

The most desirable islands were next the windows, therefore the one at which I dropped anchor (for I 'd changed from a celery-stalk into a little boat now) was exactly in the middle of the room, with no view save of faces and backs of heads.

One of the faces was that of the lady who had gone up with me in the lift; and now and then, from across the distance that separated us, I saw her glance at me. She sat alone at a table that had beautiful roses on it, and she read a book as she ate.

One ordered here *à la carte:* there was no *déjeuner à prix fixe;* and it took courage to tell a waiter who looked like a weary young duke that I would have *consommé* and bread, with nothing, no, *nothing* to follow.

Oh! the look he gave me, as if I had annexed the table under false pretences!

Suddenly the chorus of an American song ran with mocking echoes through my brain. I had heard Pamela sing it at the Convent:

> The waiter roared it through the hall:
> "We don't give bread with *one* fish-ball!
> We-don't-*give*-bread with one fish-*ba-a-ll!*"

I half expected some such crushing protest, and it was only when the weary duke had turned his back, presumably to execute my order, that I sank into my chair with a sigh of relief after strain.

Just at that moment I met the eye of the lady of the lift, and when the waiter reappeared with a small cup, on a charger large enough to have upheld the head of John the Baptist, she looked again. In five minutes I had finished the *consommé*, and it became painful to linger. Rising, I made for the door, which seemed a mile away, and I did not lift my head in passing the table where the lady sat behind her roses. I heard a rustling as I went by, however, a crisp rustling like flower-leaves whispering in a breeze, or a woman's silk ruffles stroking each other, which followed me out into the hall.

Then the pleasant voice I had heard near the lift spoke behind me:

"Won't you have your coffee with me in the garden?"

I could hardly believe at first that it was for me the invitation was intended, but turning with a little start, I saw it repeated in a pair of gentle gray eyes set rather wide apart in a delicate, colourless face.

"Oh! thank you!" I hesitated. "I ——"

"Do forgive me," went on the lady, "but your face interested me this morning, and as we're all rather curious about strangers — we idle ones here — I took the liberty of asking the manager who you were. He told me ——"

"About the Princess?" I asked, when she paused as if slightly embarrassed.

"He told me that you said you had come to Cannes to be her companion. He did n't tell me she was dead, poor

woman, but — there are some things one knows by instinct, by intuition, are n't there? And then — I could n't help seeing, or perhaps only imagining, that you looked sad and worried. You are very young, and are here all alone, and so — I thought perhaps you would n't mind my speaking to you?"

"I 'm very grateful," I said, "for your interest. And it 's so good of you to ask me to have coffee with you." (I was almost sure, too, that she had hurried away in the midst of her luncheon to do this deed of kindness.)

"Perhaps, after all, you 'll come with me to my own sitting-room," she suggested. "We can talk more quietly there; and though the garden 's quite lovely, it 's rather too glaring at this time of day."

We went up in the lift together, and the moment she opened the door of her sitting-room I saw that she had contrived to make it look like herself. She talked only about her books and photographs and flowers until the coffee had come, and we seemed better acquainted. Then she told me that she was Lady Kilmarny — "Irish in every drop in her veins"; and presently set herself to draw me out.

I began by making up my mind not to pour forth all my troubles, lest she should think that I wanted to take advantage of her kindness and sponge upon her for help; but she was irresistible, as only a true Irishwoman can be, and the first thing I knew, I had emptied my heart of its worries.

CHAPTER III

"YOU will have to go back to the cousins you 've been living with in Paris," pronounced Lady Kilmarny. "You 're much too young and pretty to be *anywhere* alone."

"I can't go on living with them unless I promise to marry Monsieur Charretier," I explained. "I 'd rather scrub floors than marry Monsieur Charretier."

"You 'd never finish one floor. The second would finish you. I thought French girls — well, then, *half* French girls — usually let their people arrange their marriages."

"Perhaps I 'm not usual. I *hope* Monsieur Charretier is n't."

"Is he such a monster?"

"He is fat, especially in all the places he ought n't to be fat. And old. But worse than his *embonpoint* and his nose, he made his money in — you could never guess."

"I see by your face, my poor child: it was Liver Pills."

"Something far more dreadful."

"Are there lower depths?"

"There are — Corn Plasters."

"Oh, my dear, you are *quite* right! You could n't marry him."

"Thank you so much! Then, I can't go back to my cousins. They — they take Monsieur Charretier seriously. I think they even take his plasters — gratuitously."

"Is he so very rich?"

"But disgustingly rich. He has an awful, bulbous new château in the country, with dozens of incredibly high-powered motor-cars; and in the most expensive part of Paris a huge apartment wriggling from floor to ceiling with *Nouveau Art.* The girl who marries him will have to be smeared with diamonds, and know the most appalling people. In fact, she 'll have to be a kind of walking, pictorial advertisement for the success of Charretier's Corn Plasters."

"He must know some nice people, since he knows relations of yours."

"Thank you for the compliment, which I hope you pay me on circumstantial evidence. But it 's deceiving. My mother, I believe, was the only nice person in her family. These cousins, husband and wife, brought mamma to Europe to live with them when she was a young girl, quite rich and an orphan. They were furious when she fell in love with papa, who was only a lieutenant with nothing but a very old name, the ruins of a castle that tourists paid francs to see, and a ramshackle house in Paris almost too dilapidated to let. It was a mere detail to them that he happened to be one of the best-looking and most agreeable young men in the world. They did nothing but say, 'I told you so!' for years, whenever anything disastrous happened — as it constantly did, for poor papa and mamma loved each other so much, and had so

much fun, that they could n't have time to be business-like. My cousins thought everything mamma did was a madness — such as sending me to the most fashionable convent school in France. As if I had n't to be educated! And then, when the castle fell so to bits that tourists would n't bother with it any more, and nobody but rats would live in the Paris house unless it was repaired — and poor papa was killed in a horrid little Saturday-to-Monday war of no importance (except to people whose hearts it broke) — oh! I believe the cousins were glad! They thought it was a judgment. That happened years ago, when I was only fifteen, and though they 've plenty of money (more than most people in the American colony) they did n't offer to help; and mamma would have died sooner than ask. I had to be snatched out of school, to find that all the beautiful dreams of being a happy *débutante* must go by contraries. We lived in the tumble-down house ourselves, mamma and I, and her friends rallied round her — she was so popular and pretty. They got her chances to give singing lessons, and me to do translating, and painting *menus*. We were happy again, after a while, in spite of all, and people were so good to us! Mamma used to hold a kind of *salon*, with all the brightest and best crowding to it, though they got nothing but sweet biscuits, *vin ordinaire*, and conversation — and besides, the house might have taken a fancy to fall down on their heads any minute. It was sporting of them to come at all!"

"And the cousins. Did they come?"

"Not they! They 're of the society of the little Brothers and Sisters of the Rich. Their set was quite different

from ours. But when mamma died nearly two years ago, and I was alone, they did call, and Cousin Emily offered me a home. I was to give up all my work, of course, which she considered degrading, and was simply to make myself useful to her as a daughter of the house might do. That was what she *said*."

"You accepted?"

"Yes. I did n't know her and her husband as well as I do now; and before she died mamma begged me to go to them, if they asked me. That was when Monsieur Charretier came on the scene — at least, he came a few months later, and I 've had no peace since. Lately, things were growing more and more impossible, when my best friend, Comtesse de Nesle, came to my rescue and found (or thought she 'd found) me this engagement with the Princess. As I told you, I simply ran away — *sneaked* away — and came here without any one but Pamela knowing. And now she — the Comtesse — is just sailing for New York with her husband."

"The Comtesse de Nesle — that pretty little American! I 've met her in Paris — and at the Dublin Horse Show," exclaimed Lady Kilmarny. "Well, I wish I could take up the rescue work where she has laid it down. I think you are a most romantic little figure, and I 'd love to engage you as my companion, only my husband and I are as poor as church mice. Like your father, we 've nothing but our name and a few ruins. When I come South for my health I can't afford such luxuries as a husband and a maid. I have to choose between them and a private sitting-room. So you see, I can't possibly indulge in a companion."

People seemed to be always wanting me as one, and then reluctantly abandoning me!

"Your kindness and sympathy have helped me a lot," said I.

"They won't pay your way."

"I have no way. So far as I can see, I shall have to stop in Cannes, anonymously so to speak, for the rest of my life."

"Where would you like to go, if you could choose — since you can't go to your relations?"

Again my thoughts travelled after Miss Paget, as if she had been a fat, red will-o'-the-wisp.

"To England, perhaps," I answered. "In a few weeks from now I might be able to find a position there." And I went on to tell, in as few words as possible, my adventure in the railway train.

"H'm!" said Lady Kilmarny. "We 'll look her up in *Who's Who*, and see if she exists. If she 's anybody, she 'll be there. And *Who's Who* I always have with me, abroad. One meets so many pretenders, it 's quite dangerous."

"How can you tell I 'm not one?" I asked. "Yet you spoke to me."

"Why, you 're down in a kind of invisible book, called 'You 're You.' It 's sufficient reference for me. Besides, if your two eyes could n't be trusted, it would be easy to shed you."

Lady Kilmarny said this smilingly, as she found the red book, and passed her finger down the columns of P's.

"Yes, here 's the name, and the two addresses on the visiting-card. She 's the Honourable Maria Paget, only

daughter of the late Baron Northfield. Yes, an engagement with her would be safe, if not agreeable. But how to get you to England?"

"Perhaps I could go as somebody's maid," I reflected aloud.

She looked at me sharply. "*Would* you do that?"

"It would be better than being an advertisement for Corn Plasters," I smiled.

"Then," said Lady Kilmarny, "perhaps, after all, I can help you. But no — I should never dare to suggest it! The thought of a girl like you — it would be too dreadful."

CHAPTER IV

WHEN my father had been extravagant, he used to say gaily in self-defence that "one owed something to one's ancestors." Certainly, if it had not been for several of his ancestors, he would not have owed so much to his contemporaries. But in spite of their agreeable vices, or because of them, I was brought up in the cult of ancestor worship, as religiously as if I had been Chinese.

To be a d'Angely was a privilege, in our eyes, which not only supplied gilding for the gingerbread, but for the most economical substitutes.

> *"Ne roi je suis,*
> *Ne prince aussi,*
> *Je suis le Sire d'Angely,"*

calmly remarked the gentleman of Louis XI.'s time, who became famous for hanging as many retainers as he liked, and defending his action by originating the family motto.

Mother also had ancestors who began to take themselves seriously somewhere about the time of the *Mayflower*, though for all we know they may have secured their passage in the steerage.

"A Courtenay can do anything," was their rather ambiguous motto, which suggested that it might have been started in self-defence, if not as a boast; and it (the name,

not the motto) had been thoughtfully sandwiched in between my Lys and my d'Angely by my sponsors in baptism, that if necessary I might ever have an excuse at hand for any dark deed or infra dig-ness.

I used often to murmur the consoling mottoes to myself when pattering through muddy streets, too poor to take an omnibus, on the way to sell — or try to sell — my translations or my *menus*. But now, after all that 's happened, if it is to strike conviction to my soul, I shall be obliged to yell it at the top of my mental lungs.

(That expression may sound ridiculous, but it is n't. We could not talk to ourselves as we do, in all kinds of voices, high or low, if we had n't mental lungs, or at the least, sub-conscious-self lungs.)

Je suis the daughter of the last Sire d'Angely; and a Courtenay can do anything; so of course it 's all right; and it 's no good my ancestors turning in their graves, for they 'll only make themselves uncomfortable without changing my mind.

I, Lys d'Angely, am going to be a lady's-maid; or rather, I am going to be the maid of an extremely rich person who calls herself a lidy.

It 's perfectly awful, or awfully comic, according to the point of view, and I swing from one to the other, pushed by my fastidiousness to my sense of humour, and back again, in a way to make me giddy. But it 's settled. I 'm going to do it. I had almost to drag the suggestion out of Lady Kilmarny, who turned red and stammered as if I were the great lady, she the poor young girl in want of a situation.

There was, said she, a quaint creature in the hotel

(one met these things abroad, and was obliged to be more or less civil to them) who resembled Monsieur Charretier in that she was disgustingly rich. It was not Corn Plasters. It was Liver Pills, the very same liver pills which had dropped into the mind of Lady Kilmarny when I hesitated to put into words the foundation of my *pretendant's* future. It was the Liver Pills which had eventually introduced into her brain the idea she falteringly embodied for me.

The husband of the quaint creature had invented the pills, even as Monsieur Charretier had invented his abomination. Because of the pills he had been made a Knight; at least, Lady Kilmarny did n't know any other reason. He was Sir Samuel Turnour (evolved from Turner), just married for the second time to a widow in whose head it was like the continual frothing of new wine to be "her ladyship."

Lady Turnour had lately quarrelled with a maid and dismissed her, Lady Kilmarny told me. Now, she was in immediate need of another, French (because French maids are fashionable) able to speak English, because the Turnour family had as yet mastered no other language. Lady Kilmarny believed that this was the honeymoon of the newly married pair, and that, after having paused on the wing at Cannes, for a little billing and cooing, they intended to pursue their travels in France for some weeks, before returning to settle down in England. "Her Ladyship" was asking everybody with whom she had contrived to scrape acquaintance (especially if they had titles) to recommend her a maid. Lady Kilmarny, as a member of the League against

Cruelty to Animals, had determined that nothing would induce her to throw any poor mouse to this cat, even if she heard of a mouse plying for hire; but here was I in a dreadful scrape, professing myself ready to snap at anything except Corn Plasters; and she felt bound to mention that the mousetrap was open, the cheese waiting to be nibbled.

"Do you think she'd have me?" I asked — "the quaint creature, her ladyship?"

"Only too likely that she would," said Lady Kilmarny. "But remember, the worst is, she does n't *know* she 's a quaint creature. She is quite happy about herself, offensively happy, and would consider you the 'creature.' A truly awful person, my dear. A man in this hotel — the little thing you saw me talking to this morning, knows all about them both. I think they began in Peckham or somewhere. They *would*, you know, and call it 'S. W.' She was a chemist's daughter, and he was the humble assistant, long before the Pill materialized, so she refused him, and married a dashing doctor. But unfortunately he dashed into the bankruptcy court, and afterward she probably nagged him to death. Anyway he died — but not till long after Sam Turner had taken pity on some irrelevant widow, as his early love was denied him. The widow had a boy, to whom the stepfather was good — (really a very decent person according to his lights!) and kept on making pills and millions, until last year he lost his first wife and got a knighthood. The old love was a widow by this time, taking in lodgers in some neighbourhood where you *do* take lodgers, and Sir Samuel found and gathered her like a late rose. Naturally she puts

on all the airs in the world, and diamonds in the morning. She 'll treat you like the dirt under her feet, because that 's her conception of her part — and yours. But I 'll introduce you to her if you like."

After a little reflection, I did like; but as it seemed to me that there 'd better not be two airs in the family, I said that I 'd put on none at all, and make no pretensions.

"She 's the kind that does n't know a lady or gentleman without a label," my kind friend warned me. "You must be prepared for that."

"I 'll be prepared for anything," I assured her. But when it came to the test, I was n't quite.

Lady Kilmarny wrote a line to Lady Turnour, and asked if she might bring a maid to be interviewed — a young woman whom she could recommend. The note was sent down to the bride (who of course had the best suite in the hotel, on the first floor) and presently an answer came — saying that Her Ladyship would be pleased to receive Lady Kilmarny and the person in question.

Suddenly I felt that I must go alone. "Please leave me to my fate," I said. "I should be too self-conscious if you were with me. Probably I should laugh in her face, or do something dreadful."

"Very well," Lady Kilmarny agreed. "Perhaps you 're right. Say that I sent you, and that, though you 've never been with me, friends of mine know all about you. You might tell her that you were to have travelled with the Princess Boriskoff. That will impress her. She would kiss the boot of a Princess. Afterward, come up and tell me how you got on with 'Her Ladyship.' "

I was stupid to be nervous, and told myself so; but as I knocked at the door of the suite reserved for Millionaires and other Royalties, my heart was giving little ineffective jumps in my breast, like — as my old nurse used to say — "a frog with three legs."

"Come in!" called a voice with sharp, jagged edges.

I opened the door. In a private drawing-room as different as the personality of one woman from another, sat Lady Turnour. She faced me as I entered, so I had a good look at her, before casting down my eyes and composing my countenance to the self-abnegating meekness which I conceived fitting to a *femme de chambre comme il faut.*

She was enthroned on a sofa. One could hardly say less, there was so much of her, and it was all arranged as perfectly as if she were about to be photographed. No normal woman, merely sitting down, with no other object than to be comfortable, would curve the tail of her gown round in front of her like a sickle; or have just the point of one shoe daintily poised on a footstool; or the sofa-cushions at exactly the right angle behind her head to make a background; or the finger with all her best rings on it, keeping the place in an English illustrated journal.

I dared not believe that she had posed for me. It must have been for Lady Kilmarny; and that I alone should see the picture was a bad beginning.

She is of the age when a woman can still tell people that she is forty, hoping they will exclaim politely, "Impossible!"

It is not enough for her to be a Ladyship and a millionairess. She will be a beauty as well, or at all costs she

will be looked at. To that end are her eyebrows and lashes black as jet, her undulated hair crimson, her lips a brighter shade of the same colour, and her skin of magnolia pallor, like the heroines of the novels which are sure to be her favourites. Once, she must have been handsome, a hollyhock queen of a kitchen-garden kingdom; but she would be far more attractive now if only she had "abdicated," as nice middle-aged women say in France.

Her dress was the very latest dream of a neurotic Parisian modiste, and would have been seductive on a slender girl. On her — well, at least she would have her wish in it — she would not pass unnoticed!

She looked surprised at sight of me, and I saw she did n't realize that I was the expected candidate.

"Lady Kilmarny could n't come," I began to explain, "and ——"

"Oh!" she cut me short. "So you are the young person she is recommending as a maid."

I corrected Miss Paget when she called me a "young woman," but times have changed since then, and in future I must humbly consent to be a young person, or even a creature.

For a minute I forgot, and almost sat down. It would have been the end of me if I had! Luckily I remembered What I was, and stood before my mistress, trying to look like Patience on a monument with butter in her mouth which must n't be allowed to melt.

"What is your name?" began the catechism (and the word was "nime," according to Lady Turnour).

"N or M," nearly slipped out of my mouth, but I

put Satan with all his mischief behind me, and answered that I was Lys d'Angely.

"Oh, the surname does n't matter. As you 're a French girl, I shall call you by your first name. It 's always done."

(The first time in history, I 'd swear, that a d 'Angely was ever told his name did n't matter!)

"You seem to speak English very well for a French woman?" (This almost with suspicion.)

"My mother was American."

"How extraordinary!"

(This was apparently a *tache.* Evidently lady's-maids are expected *not* to have American mothers!)

"Let me hear your French accent."

I let her hear it.

"H'm! It seems well enough. Paris?"

"Paris, madame."

"Don't call me 'madame.' Any common person is madame. You should say 'your ladyship'."

I said it.

"And I want you should speak to me in the third person, like the French servants are supposed to do in good houses."

"If mad — if your ladyship wishes."

(Thank heaven for a sense of humour! My one wild desire was to laugh. Without that blessing, I should have yearned to slap her.)

"What references have you got from your last situation?"

"I have never been in service before — my lady."

"My word! That 's bad. However, you 're on the

spot, and Lady Kilmarny recommends you. The poor Princess was going to try you, it seems. I should think she would n't have given much for a maid without any experience."

"I was to have had two thousand francs a year as the Princess's com — if the Princess was satisfied."

"Preposterous! I don't believe a word of it. Why, what can you *do?* Can you dress hair? Can you make a blouse?"

"I did my mother's hair, and sometimes my cousin's."

"*Your* mother! *Your* cousin! I 'm talking of a lidy."

My sense of humour *did* almost fail me just then. But I caught hold of it by the tail just as it was darting out of the window, spitting and scratching like a cross cat.

It was remembering Monsieur Charretier that brought me to my bearings. "I think your ladyship would be satisfied," I said. "And I make all my own dresses."

"That one you 've got on? — which is *most* unsuitable for a maid, I may tell you, and I should never permit it."

"This one I have on, also."

"I thought maybe it had been a present. Well, it 's *something* that you speak both English and French passably well. I 'll try you on Lady Kilmarny's recommendation, if you want to come to me for fifty francs a month. I won't give more to an *amateur*."

I thought hard for a minute. Lady Kilmarny had said it would not be many weeks before the Turnours went to England. There, if Miss Paget (who seemed extremely nice by contrast and in retrospect) were still

of the same mind, I might find a good home. If not, she was as kind as she was queer, and would help me look further. So I replied that I would accept the fifty francs, and would do my best to please her ladyship.

She did not express herself as gratified. "You can begin work this evening," she said. "I was obliged to send away my last maid yesterday, and I 'm *lost* without one." (This was delightful from a "lidy" who had kept lodgers for years, with the aid perhaps of one smudgy-nosed "general"!) "But have you no more suitable clothes? I can't let a maid of mine go flaunting about, like a Mary-Jane-on-Sunday."

I mentioned a couple of plain black dresses in my wardrobe, which might be made to answer if I were allowed a few hours' time to work upon them, and did n't add that they remained from my mourning for one dearly loved.

"You can have till six o'clock free," said Lady Turnour. "Then you must come back to lay out my things for dinner, and dress me. What about your room? Had the Princess taken something for you in the hotel?"

I evaded a direct answer by saying that I had a room; and was inwardly thankful that, evidently, the Turnours had not noticed me in the restaurant at luncheon, otherwise things might have been awkward.

"Very well, you can keep the same one, then," went on her ladyship, "and let the hotel people know it 's Sir Samuel who pays for it. To-morrow morning we leave, in our sixty-horse-power motor car. We are making a tour before going back to England. Sir Samuel's stepson joins us in Paris or perhaps before and travels

on with us. He is staying now with some French people of very high title, who live in a château. You will sit on the front seat with the chauffeur."

This was a blow! I had n't thought of the chauffeur. "But, thought I, chauffeur or no chauffeur, it 's too late now for retreat."

Talk of Prometheus with his vulture, the Spartan boy with his decently concealed wolf! What of Lys d'Angely with an English chauffeur in her pocket?

CHAPTER V

WHEN I was dismissed from the Presence, I ran to Lady Kilmarny with my story, and she agreed with me that the thing to dread most in the whole situation was the chauffeur.

"Of course he 'll naturally consider himself on an equality with you," she said, "and you 'll have to eat with him at hotels, and all that. Once, when my husband and I were touring in France, and used to break down near little inns, we were obliged to have a chauffeur at the same table with us, because there was only one long one (table, I mean, not chauffeur) and we could n't spare time to let him wait till we 'd finished. My dear, it was ghastly! You would never believe if you had n't seen it, how the creature swallowed his knife when he ate, and did conjuring tricks with his fork and spoon. I simply *dared* not look at him gnawing his bread, but used to shut my eyes. I hate to distress you, poor child, but I tell you these things as a warning. *Are* you able to bear it?"

I said that I, too, could shut my eyes.

"You can't make a habit of doing so. And he may want to put his arm round your waist, or chuck you under the chin. I used to have complaints from my maid, who was comparatively plain, while you — but I don't want to frighten you. He *may* be different from our

man. Some, they say, are most respectable. I love common people when they 're nice, and give up quite pleasantly to being common; and of course Irish ones are too delightful. But you can't hope for an Irish chauffeur. I hear they don't exist. They 're all French or German or English. Let us hope this one may be the father of a family."

It was well enough to be told to hope; and Lady Kilmarny meant to be kind, but what she said made me "creep" whenever I thought of the chauffeur.

She advised me not to take my meals with the maids and valets at the Majestic Palace, because a change, so sudden and Cinderella-like, after lunching in the restaurant, would cause disagreeable talk in the hotel. As my living in future would be at the charge of the Turnours, I might afford myself a few indulgences to begin with, she argued; and deciding that she was right, I made up my mind to have my remaining meals served in my own room.

I hastily stripped a black frock of its trimming, dressed my hair more simply even than usual, parted down the middle, and altogether strove to achieve the air of a *femme de chambre* born, not made. But I 'm bound to chronicle the fact for my own future reference (when some day I shall laugh at this adventure) that the effect, though restful to the eye, suggested the stage *femme de chambre* rather than the sober reality one sees in every-day life. However, I was conscious of having done my best, a state of mind which always produces a cool, strawberries-and-cream feeling in the soul; and thus supported I tripped (yes, I *did* trip!) downstairs to adorn Lady Turnour for dinner.

The door was open between her bedroom and the sitting-room. Waiting in the former I could hear voices in the latter. Lady Turnour and her husband were talking about the arrival of the stepson whose name, I soon gleaned from their conversation, is Herbert. Naturally, it *would* be. People like that are always named Herbert, and are familiarly known to those whom they may concern as "Bertie."

Presently, her ladyship came into the bedroom, and said, as a queen might say to her tirewoman, "Put me into my dressing-gown." If there were a feminine word for "sirrah," I think she would have liked to call me it.

My eye, roving distractedly, pounced upon a gold-embroidered, purple silk kimono, perhaps more appropriate to Pooh-Bah than to a stout English lady of the lower middle class. I released it from its hook on the door, and would that her ladyship had been as easy to release from her bodice!

She had not one hook, but many; and they were all so incredibly tight that, to put her into the dressing-gown as ordered, I feared it would be necessary to melt and pour her out of the gown she had on.

While I wrestled, silent and red faced, with a bodice as snug as the head of a drum, the lord of all it contained appeared in the doorway, and stopped, looking at me in surprise.

He is common, too, this Sir Samuel, millionaire maker of pills; but he is common in a good, almost pathetic way, quite different from his wife's way — or Monsieur Charretier's. He has stick-up gray hair curling all over his round head, blue eyes, twinkling with a mild, yet

shrewd expression (which might be merry if encouraged by her ladyship), and a large, slouching body with stooped shoulders.

"What young lady have we here?" he inquired.

"Not a young lady at all," explained his wife sharply. "My new French maid."

"I beg your pardon, I 'm sure," said Sir Samuel, though it was n't quite clear whether it was my forgiveness or that of his spouse he craved, for his mistake in supposing me to be a "young lady."

"What 's her name?" he wanted to know, evidently approving of me, if not as a maid, at least as a human being.

"Something ridiculous in French that sounds like 'Liz,'" sniffed her ladyship. "But I shall call her Elise. Also I shall expect her to stop dyeing her hair."

"But, madame, I do not dye it!" I exclaimed.

"Don't tell me. I know dyed hair when I see it."

(She ought to, having experience enough with her own!)

"Nature is the dyer, then," I ventured to persist, piqued to self-defence by the certainty that her object was to strip me of my wicked mask before her husband.

"I 'm not used to being contradicted by my servants," her ladyship reminded me.

"My dear, do let the poor girl know whether she dyes her hair or not." Sir Samuel pleaded for me with more kindness than discretion. "I 'm sure she speaks beautiful English."

"As if that had anything to do with it! She may as well understand, to begin with, that I won't put up with

"While I wrestled . . . with a bodice as snug as the head of a drum, the lord of all it contained appeared in the doorway"

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impudence and answering back. Hair that colour does n't go with dark eyes. And eyelashes like that are n't suitable to lady's-maids."

"If your ladyship pleases, what am I to do with mine?" I asked in the sweetest little voice; and I would have given anything for someone to whom I might have telegraphed a laugh.

"Wash the dark stuff off of them and let them be light," were the simple instructions promptly returned to me.

There was no more to be said, so I cast down the offending features (are one's lashes one's features?) and swallowed my feelings just as Lady Turnour will have to swallow my hair and eyelashes if I 'm to stop in her service. If they stick in her throat, I suppose she will discharge me. For a leopard cannot change his spots, and a girl will not the colour of her locks and lashes — when she happens to be fairly well satisfied with Nature's work.

CHAPTER VI

PAMELA'S mother-in-law, *la Comtesse douairière*, wears a lovely, fluffy white thing over her own diminishing front hair, which I once heard her describe, when struggling to speak English, as her "combination." Pam and I laughed nearly to extinction, but I did n't laugh this morning when I was obliged to help Lady Turnour put on hers.

They say an emperor is no hero to his valet, and neither can an empress be a heroine to her maid when she bursts for the first time upon that humble creature's sight, without her transformation.

It *did* make an unbelievable difference with her ladyship; and it must have been a blow to poor Sir Samuel, after all his years of hopeless love for a fond gazelle, when at last he made that gazelle his own, and saw it running about its bedroom with all its copper-coloured "ondulations" naïvely lying on its dressing-table.

Poor Miss Paget's false front was one of those frank, self-respecting old things one might have allowed one's grandmother to wear, just as she would wear a cap; but a transformation — well, one has perhaps believed in it, if one has not the eye of a lynx, and the disillusion is awful.

Of course, a lady's-maid is not a human being, and what it is thinking matters no more than what thinks

a chair when sat upon; so I don't suppose "her ladyship" cared ten centimes for the impression I was receiving and trying to digest in the first ten minutes after my morning entrance.

As my hair waves naturally, I 've scarcely more than a bowing acquaintance with a curling-iron; but luckily for me I always did Cousin Catherine's when she wanted to look as beautiful as she felt; and though my hands trembled with nervousness, I not only "ondulated" Lady Turnour's transformation without burning it up, but I added it to her own locks in a manner so deft as to make me want to applaud myself.

Even she could find no fault. The effect was twice as *chic* and becoming as that of yesterday. She looked younger, and nearer to being the *grande dame* that she burns to be. I saw various emotions working in her mind, and attributed her silence on the subject of my personal defects (unchanged despite her orders) to the success I was making with her toilet. In her eyes, I began to take on lustre as a Treasure not to be lightly thrown away on the turn of a dye.

When she was dressed and painted to represent a "lady motorist," it was my business to pack not only for her but for Sir Samuel, who is the sort of man to be miserable under the domination of a valet. There were a round dozen of trunks, which had to be sent on by rail, and there was also luggage for the automobile; such ingenious and pretty luggage (bran new, like everything of her ladyship's, not excepting her complexion) that it was really a pleasure to pack it. As for the poor motor maid, it was broken to her that she must, figuratively

speaking, live in a bag during the tour, and that bag must have a place under her feet as she sat beside the driver. It might make her as uncomfortable as it liked, but whatever it did, it must on no account interfere with the chauffeur.

We were supposed to start at ten, but a woman of Lady Turnour's type does n't think she 's making herself of enough importance unless she keeps people waiting. She changed her mind three times about her veil, and had her dressing-bag (a gorgeous affair, beside which mine is a mere nutshell) reopened at the last minute to get out different hatpins.

It was half-past ten when the luggage for the automobile was ready to be taken away, and having helped my mistress into her motoring coat, I left her saying farewell to some hotel acquaintances she had scraped up, and went out to put her ladyship's rugs into the car.

I had not seen it yet, nor the dreaded chauffeur, my galley-companion; but as the front door opened, *voilà* both; the car drawn up at the hotel entrance, the chauffeur dangling from its roof.

Never did I see anything in the way of an automobile so large, so azure, so magnificent, so shiny as to varnish, so dazzling as to brass and crystal.

Perhaps the windows are n't really crystal, but they were all bevelly and glittering in the sunshine, and seemed to run round the car from back to front, giving the effect of a Cinderella Coach fitted on to a motor. Never was paint so blue, never was crest on carriage panel so large and so like a vague, over-ripe tomato. Never was a chauffeur so long, so slim, so smart, so leathery.

He was dangling not because he fancied himself as a tassel, but because he was teaching some last piece of luggage to know its place on the roof it was shaped to fit.

"Thank goodness, at least he 's not fat, and won't take up much room," I thought, as I stood looking at the back of his black head.

Then he jumped down, and turned round. We gave each other a glance, and he could not help knowing that I must be her ladyship's maid, by the way I was loaded with rugs, like a beast of burden. Of my face he could see little, as I had on a thick motor-veil with a small triangular talc window, which Lady Kilmarny had given me as a present when I bade her good-bye. I had the advantage of him, therefore, in the staring contest, because his goggles were pushed up on the top of his cap with an elastic, somewhat as Miss Paget's spectacles had been caught in her false front.

His glance said: "Female thing, I 've got to be bothered by having you squashed into the seat beside me. You 'd better not be chatty with the man at the wheel, for if you are, I shall have to teach you motor manners."

My glance, I sincerely hoped, said nothing, for I hurriedly shut it off lest it should say too much, the astonished thought in my mind being: "Why, Leather Person, you look exactly like a gentleman! You have the air of being the master, and Sir Samuel your servant."

He really was a surprise, especially after Lady Kilmarny's warning. Still, I at once began to tell myself that chauffeurs *must* have intelligent faces. As

for this one's clear features, good gray eyes, brown skin, and well-made figure, they were nothing miraculous, since it is admitted that even a lower grade of beings, grooms and footmen, are generally chosen as ornaments to the establishments they adorn. Why should n't a chauffeur be picked out from among his fellows to do credit to a fine, sixty-horse-power blue motor-car? Besides, a young man who can't look rather handsome in a chauffeur's cap and neat leather coat and leggings might as well go and hang himself.

The Leather Person opened the door of the car for me, that I might put in the rugs. I murmured "thank you" and he bowed. No sooner had I arranged my affairs, and slipped the scent-bottle and bottle of salts, newly filled, into a dainty little case under the window, when Lady Turnour and Sir Samuel appeared.

I have met few, if any, queens in daily life, but I 'm almost sure that the Queen of England, for instance, would n't consider it beneath her dignity to take some notice of her chauffeur's existence if she were starting on a motor tour. Lady Turnour was miles above it, however. So far as she was concerned, one would have thought that the car ran itself; that at sight of her and Sir Samuel, the arbiters of its destiny, its heart began to beat, its body to tremble with delight at the honour in store for it.

"Tell him to shut the windows," said her ladyship, when she was settled in her place. "Does he think I 'm going to travel on a day like this with all the wind on the Riviera blowing my head off?"

The imperial order was passed on to "him," who was

addressed as Bane, or Dane, or something of that ilk; and I was sorry for poor Sir Samuel, whose face showed how little he enjoyed the prospect of being cooped up in a glass box.

"A day like this" meant that there was a wind which no one under fifty had any business to know came out of the east, for it arrived from a sky blue as a vast, inverted cup of turquoise. The sea was a cup, too; a cup of gold glittering where the Esterel mountains rimmed it, and full to the frothing brim of blue spilt by the sky.

Perhaps there was a hint of keenness in the breeze, and the palms in the hotel garden were whispering to each other about it, while they rocked the roses tangled among their fans; yet it seemed to me that the whispers were not of complaint, but of joy — joy of life, joy of beauty, and joy of the spring. The air smelled of a thousand flowers, this air that Lady Turnour shunned as if it were poison, and brought me a sense of happiness and adventure fresh as the morning. I knew I had no right to the feeling, because this was n't my adventure. I was only in it on sufferance, to oil the wheels of it, so to speak, for my betters; yet golden joy ran through all my veins as gaily, as generously, as if I were a princess instead of a lady's-maid.

Why on earth I was happy, I did n't know, for it was perfectly clear that I was going to have a horrid time; but I pitied everybody who was n't young, and starting off on a motor tour, even if on fifty francs a month "all found."

I pitied Lady Turnour because she was herself; I pitied Sir Samuel because he was married to her; I

pitied the people in the big hotel, who spent their afternoons and evenings playing bridge with all the windows hermetically sealed, while there was a world like this out of doors; and I was n't sure yet whether I pitied the chauffeur or not.

He did n't look particularly sorry for himself, as he took his seat on my right. I was well out of his way, and he had the air of having forgotten all about me, as he steered away from the hotel down the flower-bordered avenue which led to the street.

"Anyhow," said I to myself, behind my little three-cornered talc window, "whatever his faults may be, appearances are *very* deceptive if he ever tries to chuck me under the chin."

There we sat, side by side, shut away from our pastors and masters by a barrier of glass, in that state of life and on that seat to which it had pleased Providence to call us, together.

"We 're far enough apart in mind, though," I told myself. Yet I found my thoughts coming back to the man, every now and then, wondering if his nice brown profile were a mere lucky accident, or if he were really intelligent and well educated beyond his station. It was deliciously restful at first to sit there, seeing beautiful things as we flashed by, able to enjoy them in peace without having to make conversation, as the ordinary *jeune fille* must with the ordinary *jeune monsieur*.

"And is it that you love the automobilism, mademoiselle?"

"But yes, I love the automobilism. And you?"

"I also." (Hang it, what shall I say to her next?)

"And the dust. It does not too much annoy you?"

(Oh, bother, I do wish he 'd let me alone!)

"No, monsieur. Because there are compensations. The scenery, is it not?"

"And for me your society." (What a little idiot she is!)

And so on. And so on. Oh yes, there were consolations in being a motor maid, sitting as far away as possible from a cross-looking if rather handsome chauffeur, who would want to bite her if she tried to do the "society act."

But after a while, when we 'd spun past the charming villas and attractive shops of Cannes (which looks so deceitfully sylvan, and is one of the gayest watering-places in the world) silence began to be a burden.

It is such a nice motor car, and I did want to ask intelligent questions about it!

I was almost sure they would be intelligent, because already I know several things about automobiles. The Milvaines have n't got one, but most of their friends in Paris have, and though I 've never been on a long tour before, I 've done some running about. When one knows things, especially when one 's a girl — a really well-regulated, normal girl — one does like to let other people know that one knows them. It 's all well enough to cram yourself full to bursting with interesting facts which it gives you a vast amount of trouble to learn, just out of respect for your own soul; and there 's a great deal in that point of view, in one's noblest moments; but one's noblest moments are like bubbles, radiant while they last, then going pop! quite to one's own surprise,

leaving one all flat, and nothing to show for the late bubble except a little commonplace soap.

Well, I am like that, and when I 'm not nobly bubbling I love to say what I 'm thinking to somebody who will understand, instead of feeding on myself.

It really was a waste of good material to see all that lovely scenery slipping by like a panorama, and to be having quite heavenly thoughts about it, which must slip away too, and be lost for ever. I got to the pass when it would have been a relief to be asked if "this were my first visit to the Riviera;" because I could hastily have said "Yes," and then broken out with a volley of impressions.

Seeing beautiful things when you travel by rail consists mostly on getting half a glimpse, beginning to exclaim, "Oh, look *there!*" then plunging into the black gulf of a tunnel, and not coming out again until after the best bit has carefully disappeared behind an uninteresting, fat-bodied mountain. But travelling by motor-car! Oh, the difference! One sees, one feels; one is never, never bored, or impatient to arrive anywhere. One would enjoy being like the famous brook, and "go on forever."

Other automobiles were ahead of us, other cars were behind us, in the procession of Nomads leaving the South for the North, but there had been rain in the night, so that the wind carried little dust. My spirit sang when we had left the long, cool avenue lined with the great silver-trunked plane trees (which seemed always, even in sunshine, to be dappled with moonlight) and dashed toward the barrier of the Esterels that flung itself across our

path. The big blue car bounded up the steep road, laughing and purring, like some huge creature of the desert escaped from a cage, regaining its freedom. But every time we neared a curve it was considerate enough to slow down, just enough to swing round with measured rhythm, smooth as the rocking of a child's cradle.

Perhaps, thought I, the chauffeur was n't cross, but only concentrated. If I had to drive a powerful, untamed car like this, up and down roads like that, I should certainly get motor-car face, a kind of inscrutable, frozen mask that not all the cold cream in the world could ever melt.

I wondered if he resorted to cold cream, and before I knew what I was doing, I found myself staring at the statuesque brown profile through my talc triangle.

Evidently animal magnetism can leak through talc, for suddenly the chauffeur glanced sharply round at me, as if I had called him. "Did you speak?" he asked.

"Dear me, no, I should n't have dared," I hurried to assure him. Again he transferred his attention from the road to me, though only a fraction, and for only the fraction of a second. I felt that he saw me as an eagle on the wing might see a fly on a boulder toward which he was steering between intervening clouds.

"Why should n't you dare?" he wanted to know.

"One does n't usually speak to lion-tamers while they 're engaged in taming," I murmured, quite surprised at my audacity and the sound of my own voice.

The chauffeur laughed. "Oh!" he said.

"Or to captains of ocean liners on the bridge in thick fogs," I went on with my illustrations.

"What do you know about lion-tamers and captains on ocean liners?" he inquired.

"Nothing. But I imagine. I 'm always doing a lot of imagining."

"Do you think you will while you 're with Lady Turnour?"

"She has n't engaged my brain, only my hands and feet."

"And your time."

"Oh, thank goodness it does n't take time to imagine. I can imagine all the most glorious things in heaven and earth in the time it takes you to put your car at the next corner."

He looked at me longer, though the corner seemed dangerously near — to an amateur. "I see you 've learned the true secret of living," said he.

"Have I? I did n't know."

"Well, you have. You may take it from me. I 'm a good deal older than you are."

"Oh, of course, all really polite men are older than the women they 're with."

"Even chauffeurs?"

It was my turn to laugh now. "A chauffeur with a lady's-maid."

"You seem an odd sort of lady's-maid."

"I begin to think you 're an odd sort of chauffeur."

"Why?"

"Well —" I hesitated, though I knew why, perfectly. "Are n't you rather abrupt in your questions? Suppose we change the subject. You seem to have tamed this tiger until it obeys you like a kitten."

"That 's what I get my wages for. But why do you think I 'm an odd sort of chauffeur?"

"For that matter, then, why do you think I 'm an odd lady's-maid?"

"As to that, probably I 'm no judge. I never talked to one except my mother's, and she — was n't at all like you."

"Well, that proves my point. The very fact that your mother *had* a maid, shows you 're an odd sort of chauffeur."

"Oh! You mean because I was n't always 'what I seem,' and that kind of *Family Herald* thing? Do you think it odd that a chauffeur should be by way of being a gentleman? Why, nowadays the woods and the story-books are full of us. But things are made pleasanter for us in books than in real life. Out of books people fight shy of us. A 'shuvvie' with the disadvantage of having been to a public school, or handicapped by not dropping his H's, must knock something off his screw."

"Are you really in earnest, or are you joking?" I asked.

"Half and half, perhaps. Anyway, it is n't a particularly agreeable position — if that 's not too big a word for it. I envy you your imagination, in which you can shut yourself up in a kind of armour against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

"You would n't envy me if you had to do Lady Turnour's hair," I sighed.

The chauffeur laughed out aloud. "Heaven forbid!" he exclaimed.

"I 'm sure Sir Samuel would forbid, anyhow," said I.

"Do you know, I don't think this trip 's going to be so bad?" said he.

"Neither do I," I murmured in my veil.

We both laughed a good deal then. But luckily the glass was expensively thick, and the car was singing.

"What are you laughing at?" I asked.

"Something that it takes a little sense of humour to see, when you 've been down on your luck," said he.

"A sense of humour was the only thing my ancestors left me," said I. "I don't wonder you laugh. It really is quaintly funny."

"Do you think we 're laughing at the same thing?"

"I 'm almost sure of it."

"Do tell me your part, and let 's compare notes."

"Well, it 's something that nobody but us in this car — unless it 's the car itself — knows."

"Then it is the same thing. They have n't an idea of it, and would n't believe it if anyone told them. Yes, it is funny."

"About their not being ——"

"While you ——"

"And you ——"

"Thanks. A lady ——"

"A gentleman ——"

"And the only ones on board ——"

"Are the two servants!"

"As long as *they* don't notice ——"

"And we do!"

"Perhaps we may get some fun out of it?"

"Extra — outside our wages. Would it be called a 'perquisite'?"

"If so, I 'm sure we deserve it."

I sighed, thinking of her ladyship's transformation, and lacing up her boots. "Well, there 's a lot to make up for."

And he gave me another look — a very nice look, although he could see nothing of me but eyes and one third of a nose. "If I can ever at all help to make up, in the smallest way, you must let me try," he said.

I ceased to think that his profile was cross, or even stern.

I was glad that the chauffeur and I were in the same box — I mean, the same car.

CHAPTER VII

ALL the same, I wondered a great deal how he came there, and I hoped that he was wondering the same sort of thing about me. In fact, I laid myself out to produce such a result. That is to say, I took some pains to show myself as little like the common or parlour lady's-maid as possible. I never took so much pains to impress any human being, male or (far less) female, as I took to impress that mere chauffeur — the very chauffeur I 'd been lying awake at night dreading as the most objectionable feature in my new life.

All the nice things I 'd thought of by the way, before we introduced ourselves to each other, I trotted out (at least, as many as I had presence of mind to remember); and though I 'm afraid he did n't pay me the compliment of trying to "brill" in return, I told myself that it was not because he did n't think me worth brilling for, but because he 's English. It never seems to occur to an Englishman to "show off." I believe if Sir Samuel Turnour's chauffeur, Mr. What's-his-name, knew twenty-seven languages, he could be silent in all of them.

He did let me play the car's musical siren, though; a fascinating bugbear, supposed to warn children, chickens, and other light-minded animals that something important is coming, and they 'd better look alive. It

has two tunes, one grave, one gay. I suppose we would use the grave one if the creature had n't looked alive?

Although he did n't say much, the chauffeur (or "shuvvie" as he scornfully names himself) knew all about Robert Macaire and Caspard De Besse — knew more about them than I, also their escapades on this road over the Esterels, and in the mountain fastnesses, when highwaymen were as fashionable as motor-cars are now. I 'd forgotten that it was this part of the world where they earned their bread and fame; and was quite thrilled to hear that the ghost of De Besse is supposed to keep on, as a permanent residence, his old shelter cave near the summit of strangely shaped Mont Vinaigre. I 'm sure, though, even if we 'd passed his pitch at midnight instead of midday, he would n't have dared pop out and cry "Stand and deliver!" to a sixty-horsepower Aigle.

I almost wished it were night, as we swooped over mountain tops, our eyes plunging down the deep gorges, and dropping with fearful joy over precipices, for the effect would have been more solemn, more mysterious. I could imagine that the fantastically formed rocks which loomed above us or stood ranged far below would have looked by moonlight like statues and busts of Titans, carved to show poor little humanity such creatures as a dead world had known. But it is hard for one's imagination to do the best of which it feels capable when one is dying for lunch.

Even the old "Murder Inn," which my companion obligingly pointed out, did n't give me the thrill it ought, because time was getting on when we flew past it, and

I would have been capable of eating vulgar bread and cheese under its wickedly historic roof if I had been invited.

"Do you suppose they know anything about the road and its history?" I asked the chauffeur, with a slight gesture of my swathed head toward the solid wall of glass which was our background.

"They? Certainly not, and don't want to know," he answered with an air of assurance.

"Why do they go about in motors then," I wondered, "if they don't take interest in things they pass?"

"You must understand as well as I do why this sort of person goes about in motors," said he. "They go because other people go — because it 's the thing. The 'other people' whom they slavishly imitate may really like the exhilaration, the ozone, the sight-seeing, or all three; but to this type the only part that matters is letting it be seen that they 've got a handsome car, and being able to say "We 've just come from the Riviera in our sixty-horse-power motor-car. They 'd always mention the power."

"Lady Turnour did, even to me," I remembered. "But is Sir Samuel like that?"

"No, to do him justice, he is n't, poor man. But his wife is his Juggernaut. I believe he enjoys lying under her wheels, or thinks he does — which is the same thing."

"Have you been with them long?" I dared to inquire.

"Only a few days. I brought the car down for them from Paris, though not this way — a shorter one. We 're new brooms, the car and I."

"All their brooms seem to be new," I reflected. "I wonder what the stepson is like?"

"Luckily it does n't matter much to me," said the chauffeur indifferently.

"Nor to me. But his name's Herbert."

"His surname?"

"I don't know. There 's a Herbert lurking somewhere. It always suggests to me oily hair parted in the middle and smeared down on each side of a low, narrow forehead. Could you know a 'Bertie'?"

"I did once, and never want to again. He was a swine and a snob. Hope you never came across the combination?"

I forgot to answer, because, having left the mountain world behind, a formidable line of nobly planned arches began striding along beside us, through the sun-bright fields, and I was sure it must be the giant Roman aqueduct of Fréjus.

Instead of discussing such little things as the Turnours and their Bertie, we began to talk of Phœnicians, Ligurians, and of Romans; of Pliny, who had a beloved friend at Fréjus; and all the while to breathe in the perfume of a land over which a vast tidal wave of balsamic pines had swept.

Fréjus we were not to see now: that was for the dim future, after lunch; but we turned to the left off the main road, and ran on until we saw, bathed in pines, deliciously deluged and drowned in pines, the white glimmer of classic-looking villas. These meant Valescure, said the chauffeur; and the Grand Hotel — not classic looking, but pretty in its terraced garden — meant luncheon.

The car drew up before the door, according to order, or rather, according to hypnotic suggestion; for it seems that it is the chauffeur who alone knows anything of the way, and who, while appearing to be non-committal, is virtually planning the tour. "Valescure might be a good stopping-place for lunch," he had murmured, an eye on the road map over which his head bent with Sir Samuel's. "Very beautiful — rather exclusive. You may remember Mr. Chamberlain stopped there."

The exclusiveness and the Chamberlain-ness decided Lady Turnour, behind Sir Samuel's shoulder (so the chauffeur told me); consequently, here we were — and not at St. Raphael, which would have seemed the more obvious place to stop.

I say "we," but Lady Turnour would have been surprised to hear that her maid dared count herself and a chauffeur in the programme. Creatures like us must be fed, just as you pour petrol into the tanks of a motor, or stoke a furnace with coals, because otherwise our mechanism would n't go, and that would be awkward when we were wanted.

The chauffeur opened the door of the car as if he had been born to open motor-car doors, and Lady Turnour allowed herself to be helped out by her husband. Her jewel-bag clutched in her hand (she does n't know me well enough yet to trust me with it, and has n't had bagsful of jewels for long), she passed her two servants without expending a look on them. Sir Samuel followed, telling his chauffeur to have the automobile ready at the door again in an hour and a quarter; and we two Worms were left to our own resources.

"I shan't garage her," said my fellow Worm of the car. "I 'll just drive her out of the way, where I can look over her a bit when I 've snatched something to eat. I 'll take the fur rugs inside — you 're not to bother, they 're big enough to swamp you entirely. And then you ——"

"Yes, then I ——" I repeated desolately. "What is to become of me?"

"Why, you 're to have your lunch, of course," he replied. "I thought you said you were hungry."

"So I am, starving. But ——"

"Well?"

"Are n't you going to have a proper lunch?"

"A sandwich and a piece of cheese will do for me, because there are one or two little things to tinker up on the car, and an hour and a quarter is n't long. I think I shall bring my grub out of doors, and —— But is anything the matter?"

"I can't go in and have lunch alone. I simply can't," I confessed to the young man whose society I had intended to avoid like a pestilence. "You see, I — I never — this is the first time."

A look of comprehension flashed over his face.

"Yes, I see," he said. "Of course, the moment I heard your voice I realized that this was n't your sort of work, but I did n't know you were quite so new to it as all that. You 've never taken a meal in the couriers' room of an hotel?"

"No," I confessed. "At the Majestic Palace Lady Kil — that is, I decided to have everything brought up to my room, there."

"By Jove, we are a strange pair! This is my first job, too, and so far I 've been able to feed where I chose; but that 's too good to last on tour. One must accommodate oneself to circumstances, and a man easily can. But you — I know how you feel. However, it 's the first step that costs. Do you mind much?"

"It 's the stepping in alone that costs the most," I said.

"Well, I 'm only too delighted if I can be of the least use. Let the car rip! I 'll see to her afterward. Now I 'm going to take care of you. You need it more than she does."

What would Lady Kilmarny have said if she had heard my deliberate encouragement of the chauffeur, and his reckless response? What would she have thought if she could have seen us walking into the couriers' dining-room, side by side, as if we had been friends for as many years as we 'd really been acquaintances for minutes, leaving the car he was paid to cherish in his bosom sulking alone!

That sweet lady's face, surprised and reproachful, rose before my eyes, but I had no regrets. And instead of trembling with apprehension when I saw that the couriers' room was empty, I rejoiced in the prospect of lunching alone with the redoubtable chauffeur.

It was too early for the regular feeding hour of the *pensionnaires*, maids, and valets, and we sat down opposite each other at the end of a long table. A bored young waiter, with little to hope for in the way of *pourboires*, ambled off in quest of our food. I began to unfasten my head covering, and after a search for various fugitive

pins I emerged from obscurity, like the moon from behind a cloud.

With a sigh of relief, I smiled at my companion; and it was only his expression of surprise which reminded me that he had been seeing me "as through a glass darkly."

I suppose, unless you are a sort of Sherlock Holmes of physiognomy, you can't map out a woman's face by a mere glimpse of eyes through a triangular bit of talc, already somewhat damaged by exposure to sun and wind.

It may n't be good manners to look a gift motor-veil in the talc, but I must admit that, glad as I was of its protection, mine was somewhat the worse for certain bubbles, cracks, and speckles; so whether or no Mr. Bane or Dane may combine the science of chauffeuring with that of physiognomy, it 's certain that he had the air of being taken aback.

Of course, I know that I 'm not exactly plain, and that the contrast between my eyes and hair is a little out of the common; so, as soon as I remembered that he had n't seen me before, I guessed more or less what his almost startled look meant. Still, I suppose most girls — anyway, half-French, half-American girls — would have done exactly what I proceeded to do.

I looked as innocent as a fluffy chicken when it first sidles out of its eggshell into the wide, wide world; and said: "Oh, I do hope I have n't a smudge on the end of my nose?"

"No," replied the chauffeur, instantly becoming expressionless. "Why do you ask?"

"Only I was afraid, from your face, that there was something wrong."

"So far as I can see, there 's nothing wrong," said he, calmly, and broke a piece of bread. "Very good butter, this, that they give to *nous autres*," he went on, in the same tone of voice, and my respect for him increased.

(Men are really rather nice creatures, take them all in all!)

As he had sacrificed his duty to the car for me, I sacrificed my duty to my digestion for him, and bolted my luncheon. Then, when released from guard duty, he returned to his true allegiance, and I ventured to walk on the terrace to admire the view.

Far away it stretched, over garden, and pineland, and flowery meadow-spaces, to the blue, silver-sewn sea, which to my fancy looked Homeric. Nothing modern caught the eye to break the romance of the illusion. All was as it might have been twenty or thirty centuries ago, when on the Mediterranean sailed "Phœnicians, mariners renowned, greedy merchantmen with countless gauds in a black ship."

I had just begun to play that I was a young woman of Tyre, taken on an adventurous excursion by an indulgent father, when presto! Lady Turnour's voice brought me back to the present with a jump. There 's nothing Homeric about her!

She and Sir Samuel had finished their luncheon, and so had several other people. There was an exodus of well-dressed, nice-looking women from dining-room to terrace, and conscious that I ought to have been herding among their maids, I fled with haste and humility. What right had I, in this sweet place divinely fit to be a rest-cure for goddesses tired of the social diversions of Olympus?

I scuttled off to the car, and stood ready to serve my mistress when it should please her to be tucked under her rugs.

Despite delays, the chauffeur had finished whatever had to be done, and soon we were spinning away from Valescure, far away, into a world of flowers.

Black cypresses soared skyward, so clean cut, so definite, that I seemed to hear them, crystal-shrill, like the sharp notes in music, as they leaped darkly out from a silver monotone of olives and a delicate ripple of pearly plum or pear blossom. Mimosas poured floods of gold over the spring landscape, blazing violently against the cloudless blue. Bloom of peach and apple tree garlanded our road on either side; the way was jewelled with roses; and acres of hyacinths stretched into the distance, their perfume softening the keenness of the breeze.

"Are they going to let you pass Fréjus without pausing for a single look?" I asked mournfully. But at that instant there came a peal of the electric bell which is one of the luxurious fittings of the car. It meant "stop!" and we stopped.

"Are n't there some ruins here — something middle-aged?" asked Sir Samuel, meaning mediæval.

"Roman ruins, sir," replied his chauffeur, without changing countenance.

"Are they the sort of things you ought to say you 've seen?"

"I think most people do stop and see them, sir."

"What is your wish, my dear?" Sir Samuel gallantly deferred to his bride. "I know you don't like out-of-

door sightseeing when it 's windy, and blows your hair about, but ——"

"We might try, and if I don't like it, we can go on," replied Lady Turnour, patronizing the remains of Roman greatness, since it appeared to be the "thing" for the nobility and gentry to do.

The chauffeur obediently turned the big blue Aigle, and let her sail into the very centre of the vast arena where Cæsar saw gladiators fight and die.

It was very noble, very inspiring, and from some shady corner promptly emerged a quaintly picturesque old guardian, ready to pour forth floods of historic information. He introduced himself as a soldier who had seen fighting in Mexico under Maximilian, therefore the better able to appreciate and fulfil his present task. But her ladyship listened for awhile with lack-lustre eyes, and finally, when dates were flying about her ears like hail, calmly interrupted to say that she was "glad she had n't lived in the days when you had to go to the theatre out of doors."

"I can't understand more than one word in twelve that the old thing says, anyhow," she went on. "Elise must give me French lessons every day while she does my hair. I hope she has the right accent."

"He 's saying that this amphitheatre was once almost as large as the one at Nîmes, but that it would only hold about ten thousand spectators," explained the chauffeur, who was engaged partly for his French and knowledge of France.

"It 's nonsense bothering to know that now, when the place is tumbling to pieces," sneered her ladyship.

"I beg your pardon, my lady; I only thought that, as a rule, the best people do feel bound to know these things. But of course ——" He paused deferentially, without a twinkle in his eye, though I was pressing my lips tightly together, and trying not to shake spasmodically.

"Oh, well, go on. What else does the old boy say, then?" groaned Lady Turnour, *martyrisée*.

Mr. Bane or Dane did n't dare to glance at me. With perfect gravity he translated the guide's best bits, enlarging upon them here and there in a way which showed that he had independent knowledge of his own. And it was a feather in his cap that his eloquence eventually interested Lady Turnour. She made him tell her again how Fréjus was Claustra Gallæ to Cæsar, and how it was the "Caput" for this part of the wonderful Via Aurelia, which started at Rome, never ending until it came to Arles.

"Why, we 've been to Rome, and we 're going to Arles," she exclaimed. "We can tell people we 've been over the whole of the Via Aurelia, can't we? We need n't mention that the automobile did n't arrive till after we got to Cannes. And anyway, you say there were once theatres there, and at Antibes, like the one at Fréjus, so we 've been making a kind of Roman pilgrimage all along, if we 'd only known it."

"It is considered quite the thing to do, in Roman amphitheatres, to make a tour of the prisoners' cells and gladiators' dressing-rooms, the guide says," insinuated the chauffeur. And then, when the bride and bridegroom, reluctant but conscientious, were swimming round the vast bowl of masonry, like tea-leaves floating in a great cup, he turned to me.

"Why don't you thank me?" he inquired. "I was doing it for you. I knew you hated to miss all this, and I saw she meant to go on, so I intervened, in the only way I could think of, to touch her."

"If you 're always as clever as that, I don't see why this should n't be *our* trip," I said. "That will be a consolation."

"I 'm afraid you 'll often need more consolation than that," he answered. "Lady Turnour is — as the Americans say — a pretty 'stiff proposition.' "

"Still, if you can hypnotize her into going to all the places, and stopping to look at all the nicest things, this will at least be a cheap automobile tour for us both."

I laughed, but he did n't; and I was sorry, for I thought I deserved a smile. And he has a nice one, with even white teeth in it, and a wistful sort of look in his eyes at the same time: a really interesting smile.

I wondered what he was thinking about that made him look so grave; but I conceitedly felt that it was something concerning me — or the situation of us both.

CHAPTER VIII

THE tidal wave of pines followed us as, having had one glance at the Porte Dorée, we left Fréjus, old and new, behind. It followed us out of gay little St. Raphael, lying in its alluvial plain of flowers, and on along the coast past which the ships of Augustus Cæsar used to sail.

Not in my most starry dreams could I have fancied a road as beautiful as that which opened to us soon, winding above the dancing water.

Graceful dryad pines knelt by the wayside, stretching out their arms to the sea, where charming little bays shone behind enlacing branches, blue as the eyes of a wood-nymph gleaming shyly through the brown tangle of her hair. Pine balsam mingled with the bitter-sweet perfume of almond blossom, and caught a pungent tang of salt from the wind.

What romance — what beauty! It made me in love with life, just to pass this way, and know that so much hidden loveliness existed. I glanced furtively over my shoulder at the couple whose honeymoon it is — our master and mistress. Lady Turnour sat nodding in the conservatory atmosphere of her glass cage, and Sir Samuel was earnestly choosing a cigar.

Suddenly it struck me that Providence must have a vast sense of humour, and that the little inhabitants of

this earth, high and low, must afford It a great deal of benevolent amusement.

All too soon we swept out of the forest, straight into a little town, St. Maxime, with a picturesque port of its own, where red-sailed fishing boats lolled as idly as the dark-eyed young men in cafés near the shore. A few tourists walking out from the hotel on the hill gazed rather curiously at us in our fine blue car; and we gazed away from them, across a sapphire gulf, to the distant houses of St. Tropez, banked high against a promontory of emerald.

I should have liked to run on to St. Tropez, for I knew his pretty legend; how he was one of the guards of St. Paul in prison, and was converted by the eloquence of his captive; but the chauffeur said that, after La Foux (famed home of miniature horses) the coast road would lose its surface of velvet. It would be laced in and out with crossings of a local railway line, and there would be so many bumps that Lady Turnour was certain to wake up very cross.

"For your sake I don't want to make her cross," said he, and turned inland; but the way was no less beautiful. The pines were tired of running after us, but great cork trees marched beside the road, like an army of crusaders in disarray, half in, half out, of armour. Above, rose the Mountains of the Moors, whose very name seemed to ring with the distant echo of a Saracen war song; and here and there, on a bare, wild hillside, towered all that was left of some ancient castle, fallen into ruin. Cogolin was fine, and Grimaud was even finer.

Up a steep ascent, through shadowy forests we had

passed, now and then coming suddenly upon a little red-roofed village nestling among the trees as a strawberry among its leaves, when abruptly we flashed out where spaces of sky and silver sea opened. Between hills that seemed to sweep a curtsey to us, we flew down an apple-paring road toward Hyères.

The Turnours had lunched, if not wisely, probably too well, at Valescure about one o'clock, and it was n't yet four; but the air at the beautiful Costebelle hotels is said to be perpetually glittering with Royalties and other bright beings of the great world, so her ladyship would n't have been persuaded to miss the place.

Not that anyone tried to persuade her, for the two powers behind the throne (and in front of the car) wanted to go — not to see the Royalties, but the beauties of Costebelle itself.

We slipped gently through the town of Hyéres, whose avenues of giant palms looked like great sea anemones turned into trees, and then spurted up a hill into a vast and fragrant grove that smelled of a thousand flowers. In the grove stood three hotels, with wide views over jade-green lagoons to an indigo sea; and at the most charming of the trio we stopped.

Nothing was said about tea for the two servants, but while the "quality" had theirs on an exquisite terrace, the chauffeur brought a steaming cup to me, as I sat in the car.

"This was given me for my *beaux yeux*," he said, "but I don't want any tea, so please take it, and don't let it be wasted."

I was convinced that he had paid for that cup of tea

with coin harder if not brighter than the *beaux yeux* in question; but it would have hurt his feelings if I had refused, therefore I drank the tea and thanked the giver.

"You are being very kind to me," I said, "Mr. Bane or Dane; so do you mind telling me which it is?"

"Dane," he replied shortly. "Not that it matters. A chauffeur by any other name would smell as much of oil and petrol. It 's actually my real name, too. Are you surprised? I was either too proud or too stubborn to change it — I 'm not sure which — when I took up 'shuvving' for a livelihood."

"No, I 'm not surprised," I said. "You don't look like the sort of man who would change his name as if it were a coat. I 've kept mine, too, to 'maid' with. You 'shuv,' I 'maid.' It sounds like an exercise in a strange language."

"That 's precisely what it is," he answered. "A difficult language to learn at first, but I 'm getting the 'hang' of it. I hope you won't need to pursue the study very thoroughly."

"And you think you will?"

"I think so," he said, his face hardening a little, and looking dogged. "I don't see any way out of it for the present."

I was silent for almost a whole minute — which can seem a long time to a woman — half hoping that he meant to tell me something about himself; how it was that he 'd decided to be a professional chauffeur, and so on. I was sure there must be a story, an interesting story — perhaps a romantic one — and if he confided in me, I would in him. Why not, when — on my part, at least — there 's

nothing to conceal, and we 're bound to be companions of the Road for weal or woe? But if he felt any temptation to be expansive he resisted it, like a true Englishman; and to break a silence which grew almost embarrassing I was driven to ask him, quite brazenly, if he had no curiosity to know my name.

"Not exactly curiosity," said he, smiling his pleasant smile again. "I 'm never curious about people I — like, or feel that I 'm going to like. It is n't my nature."

"It 's just the opposite with me."

"We 're of opposite sexes."

"You believe that explains it? I don't know. Man may be a fellow creature, I suppose — though they did n't teach me that at the Convent. But tell me this: even if you have no curiosity, because you hope you can manage to endure me, *do* you think I look like an 'Elise'?"

"Somehow, you don't. Names have different colours for me. Elise is bright pink. You ought to be silver, or pale blue."

"Elise is my professional name; Lady Turnour is my sponsor. My real name 's Lys — Lys d'Angely."

"Good! Lys *is* silver."

"I wish I could coin it. Let me see if I can guess what you ought to be? You look like — like — well, Jack would suit you. But that 's too good to be true. I shall never meet a 'Jack' except in books and ballads."

"My name is John Claud. But when I was a boy, I always fought any chap who called me 'Claud,' and tried to give him a black eye or a bloody nose. You may call **me** Jack, if you like."

"Certainly not. I shall call you Mr. Dane."

"Shuvvers are never mistered."

"Not even by the females of their kind? I always supposed that manners were very toploftical in the servants' hall."

"We may both soon know."

"Elise, take that cup at once where you got it from, and come back to your place. We are ready to start."

This from Lady Turnour. (Really, if she takes to interfering every time we others have got to the middle of an interesting conversation, I don't know what I shall do to her! Perhaps I 'll put her transformation on sidewise. Or would that be blackmail?)

Silently the chauffeur took the cup from my frightened fingers, and marched off with it into the hotel, without a "by your leave" or "with your leave."

"My word, your chauffeur might have better manners!" grumbled Lady Turnour to Sir Samuel, as she climbed into the car; but there was no scolding when the rude young man came briskly back, looking supremely unconscious of having given offence.

"Now we must make good time to Marseilles, if we 're to get there for dinner," he said, when he had started the car, and taken his place. "We shall stop there to-night, or rather, just outside the town, in one of the nicest hotels on earth, as you will see."

"Whose choice?" I asked.

"Mine," he laughed, "but I don't think Sir Samuel knows that!"

Down to Hyères we floated again, on the wings of the Aigle, I looking longingly across the valley where the

old town climbed a citadeled hill, and lay down at the foot of a sturdy though crumbling castle. If this were *really* my own tour, as I am trying to play it is, I would have commanded a long stop at Costebelle, to make explorations of the region round about. I can imagine no greater joy than to be able to stay at beautiful places as long as one wished, and to keep on doing beautiful things till one tired of doing them.

But life is a good deal like a big busybody of a policeman, continually telling us to get up and move on!

Our world was a flower world again, ringed in like a secret fairyland, with distant mountains of extraordinarily graceful shapes — charming lady-mountains; and as far as we could see the road was cut through a carpet of pink, white, and golden blossoms destined by and by for the markets of Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna.

Before I thought it could be so near, we dashed into Toulon, a very different Toulon from the Toulon of the railway station, where I remembered stopping a few mornings (which seemed like a few years) ago. Now, it looked a noble and impressive place, as well as a tremendously busy town; but my eye climbed to the towery heights above, wondering on which one Napoleon — a smart young officer of artillery — placed the batteries that shelled the British out of the harbour, and gained for him the first small laurel leaf of his imperial crown.

I thought, too, of all the French novels I 'd read, whose sailor heroes were stationed at Toulon, and there met romantic or sensational adventures. They were always handsome and dashing, those heroes, and as we

threaded intricate fortifications, I found myself looking out for at least one or two of them.

Yes, they were there, plenty of heroes, almost all handsome, with splendid dark eyes that searched flatteringly to penetrate the mystery of my talc triangle. They did n't know, poor dears, that there was nothing better than a lady's-maid behind it. What a waste of gorgeous glances!

I laughed to myself at the fancy, and the chauffeur sitting beside me wanted to know why; but I would n't tell him. One really can't say everything to a man one has known only for a day. And yet, the curious part is, I feel as if we had been the best of friends for a long time. I never felt like that toward any man before, but I suppose it is because of the queer resemblance in our fates.

Beyond Toulon we had to slow down for a long procession of gypsy caravans on their way to town; quaint, moving houses, with strings of huge pearls that were gleaming onions, festooned across their blue or green doors and windows; and out from those doors and windows wonderful eyes gazed at us — eyes full of secrets of the East, strange eyes, more fascinating in their passing glance than those of the gay young heroes at Toulon.

So we flew on to the village of Ollioules, and into the dim mountain gorge of the same musical name. The car plunged boldly through the veil of deep blue shadow which hung, ghostlike, over the serpentine curves of the white road; and out of its twilight-mystery rose always the faint singing of a little river that ran beside us, under the steep gray wall of towering rock.

At the top of the gorge a surprise of beauty waited for us as our way led along a sinuous road cut into the swelling mountain-side. Far off lay the sea, with an army of tremendous purple rocks hurling themselves headlong into the molten gold of the water, like a drove of mammoths. All the world was gold and royal purple. Hills and mountains stood up, darkly violet, out of a golden plain, against a sky of gold; and it was such a picture as only Heaven or Turner could have painted.

Nor was there any break in the varied splendour of the scene and of the sun's setting until we came to the dull-looking town of Aubagne. After that, the Southern darkness swooped in haste, and while we wound tediously through the immense, never-ending traffic of Marseilles, it "made night." All the length and breadth of the Cannebière burst into brilliance of electric light, as if in our honour. The great street looked as gay as a Paris boulevard; and as we turned into it, we turned into an adventure.

To begin with, nothing seemed less likely than an adventure. We drew up calmly before the door of a hotel whence a telephonic demand for rooms must be sent to La Reserve, under the same management. It was the chauffeur who had to go in and telephone, for the bridegroom is even more helpless in French than the bride; and before Mr. Dane could stop the car, Sir Samuel called out: "Keep the motor going, to save time. You need n't be a minute in there. Her ladyship is hungry, and wants to get on."

The chauffeur raised his eyebrows, but obeyed in silence, leaving the motor hard at work, the automobile

panting as impatiently to be off as if "she" suffered with Lady Turnour.

No sooner was the tall, leather-clad figure out of sight than a crowd of small boys and youths pressed boldly round the handsome car. Her splendour was her undoing, for a plain, every-day sort of automobile might have failed to attract.

Laughing, jabbering *patois*, a dozen young imps forced their audacious attentions on the unprotected azure beauty. What was I, that I could defend her, left there as helpless as she, while her great heart throbbed under me?

It was easy to say "*Allez-vous en — va!*" and I said it, not once, but again and again, each time more emphatically than before. Nobody paid the slightest attention, however, except, perhaps to find an extra spice of pleasure in tormenting me. If I had been a yapping miniature lap-dog, with teeth only *pour faire rire*, I could not have been treated with greater disdain by the crowd. I glanced hastily round to see if Sir Samuel had not taken alarm; but, sitting beside his wife in the big crystal cage, he seemed blissfully unconscious of danger to his splendid Aigle. Instead, the couple looked rather pleased than otherwise to be a centre of attraction.

"Perhaps," I thought, "they 're right, and these young wretches can work no real harm to the car. They ought to know better than I ——"

But they did n't; for before the thought could spin itself out in my mind, a gypsy-eyed little fiend of twelve or thirteen made a spring at the driver's seat. With a yelp of mischievous glee he proved his daring to his

comrades by snatching at the starting-lever. He was quick as a flash of summer lightning, but if I had n't been quicker, the big car might have leaped into life, and run amuck through the most crowded street in busy Marseilles. I felt myself go cold and hot, horribly uncertain whether my interference might work harm or good, but before I quite knew what I did, I had sent the boy flying with a sounding box on the ear.

He squealed as he sprawled backward, and I stood up, ready for battle, my fingers tingling, my heart pounding. The imp was up again, in half a breath, pushed forward by his friends to take revenge, and I could hear Sir Samuel or her ladyship wrestling vainly with the window behind me. What would have happened next I can't tell, except that I was in a mood to fight for our car till the death, even if knives flashed out; and I think I was gasping "Police! Police!" but at that instant Mr. Jack Dane hurled himself like a catapult from the hotel. He dashed the weedy youths out of his way like ninepins, jumped to his seat, and the car and the car's occupants were safe.

"You are a trump, Miss d'Angely," said he, as we boomed away from the hotel, scattering the crowd before us as an eddy of wind scatters autumn leaves. "You did just the right thing at just the right time. It was all my fault. I ought n't to have left the motor going."

"It was Sir Samuel's fault," I contradicted him.

"No. Whatever goes wrong with the car is always the chauffeur's fault. Sir Samuel wanted me to do a foolish thing, and I ought n't to have done it. I had your life to think of ——"

"And theirs."

"Theirs, of course. But I would have thought of yours first."

It made my heart feel as warm as a bird in a nest to be complimented by the man at the helm for presence of mind, and then to hear that already I 'd gained a friend to whom my life was of some value. Since my mother died, there has been no one for whom I 've come first.

I wanted badly to do something to show my gratitude, but could think of nothing except that, by and by, when we knew each other better, I might offer to sew on his buttons or mend his socks.

CHAPTER IX

"I SUPPOSE we 'll meet by-and-by at dinner?" I said (I 'm afraid rather wistfully) to the chauffeur as he drove the car up a steep hill to the door of La Reserve, on The Corniche.

"Well, no," he answered, "because you need n't fear anything disagreeable here, and I 'm going to stop at a less expensive place. You see, I pay my own way, and as I really have to live on my screw, it does n't run to grand hotels. This one *is* rather grand; but you will be all right, because, although it 's a famous place for food, at this season few people stop overnight, and I 've found out through the telephone that the Turnours are the only ones who have taken bedrooms. That means you 'll have your dinner and breakfast by yourself."

"Oh, that will be nice!" I said, trying to speak as if I delighted in the thought of solitude and reflection. "I wish I were paying my own way, too; but I could n't do it on fifty francs a month, could I?"

"Fifty francs a month!" he echoed, astonished. "Is that your compensation for being a slave to such a woman? By Jove, it makes me hot all over, to think that a girl like you should ——"

"Well, this trip is thrown in as additional compensation," I reminded him. "And thanks to you and your

kindness, I believe I 'm going to find my place more than tolerable."

The car stopped, and duty began. I could n't even turn and say good night to the chauffeur, as I walked primly into the hotel, laden with my mistress's things.

She and Sir Samuel had the best rooms in the house, a suite big enough and grand enough for a king and queen, with a delightful *loggia* overlooking the high garden and the sea. But of course Lady Turnour would die rather than seem impressed by anything, and would probably pick faults if she were invited to sleep at Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle — a contingency which I think unlikely. She was snappish with hunger, and did not trouble to restrain her temper before me. Poor Sir Samuel! It is he who has snatched her from her lodging-house, to lead her into luxury, because of his faithful love of many years; and this is the way she rewards him! If I 'd been in his place, and had a javelin handy, I think I might suddenly have become a widower.

She was better after dinner, however, so I knew she must have been well fed: and in the morning, after a gorgeous *déjeuner* on the loggia, she was in an amiable mood to plan for the day's journey.

At ten o'clock the chauffeur arrived, and was shown up to the Turnours' vast Louis XVI. salon. He looked as much like an icily regular, splendidly null, bronze statue as a flesh-and-blood young man could possibly look, for that, no doubt, is his conception of the part of a well-trained "shuvver"; and he did not seem aware of my existence as he stood, cap in hand, ready for orders.

As for me, I flatter myself that I was equally admirable

in my own *métier*. I was assorting a motley collection of guide-books, novels, maps, smelling-salts, and kodaks when he came in, and was dying to look up, but I remained as sweetly expressionless as a doll.

The bronze statue respectfully inquired how its master would like to make a little détour, instead of going by way of Aix-en-Provence to Avignon, as arranged. Within an easy run was a spot loved by artists, and beginning to be talked about — Martigues on the Etang de Berre, a salt lake not far from Marseilles — said to be picturesque. The Prince of Monaco was fond of motoring down that way.

At the sound of a princely name her ladyship's mind made itself up with a snap. So the change of programme was decided upon, and curious as to the chauffeur's motive, I questioned him when again we sat shoulder to shoulder, the salt wind flying past our faces.

"Why the Etang de Berre?" I asked.

"Oh, I rather thought it would interest you. It 's a queer spot."

"Thank you. You think I like queer spots — and things?"

"Yes, and people. I 'm sure you do. You 'll like the Etang and the country round, but *they* won't."

"That 's a detail," said I, "since this tour runs itself in the interests of the *femme de chambre* and the chauffeur."

"We 're the only ones who have any interests that matter. It 's all the same to them, really, where they go, if I take the car over good roads and land them at expensive hotels at night. But I 'm not going to do that always.

They 've got to see the Gorge of the Tarn. They don't know that yet, but they have."

"And won't they like seeing it?"

"Lady Turnour will hate it."

"Then we may as well give it up. Her will is mightier than the sword."

"Once she 's in, there 'll be no turning back. She 'll have to push on to the end."

"She may n't consent to go in."

"Queen Margherita of Italy is said to have the idea of visiting the Tarn next summer. Think what it would mean to Lady Turnour to get the start of a queen!"

"You are Machiavelian! When did you have this inspiration?"

"Well, I got thinking last night that, as they have plenty of time — almost as much time as money — it seemed a pity that I should whirl them along the road to Paris at the rate planned originally. You see, though there are plenty of interesting places on the way mapped out — you 've been to Tours, you say ——"

"What of that?"

"Oh, the trip might as well be new for everybody except myself; and as you like adventures ——"

"You think it 's the Turnours' duty to have them."

"Just so. If only to punish her ladyship for grinding you down to fifty francs a month. What a reptile!"

"If she 's a reptile, I 'm a cat to plot against her."

"Do cats plot? Only against mice, I think. And anyhow, *I 'm* doing all the plotting. I 've felt a different man since yesterday. I 've got something to live for."

"Oh, *what?*" The question asked itself.

"For a comrade in misfortune. And to see her to her journey's end. I suppose that end will be in Paris?"

"No-o," I said. "I rather think I shall go on all the way to England with Lady Turnour — if I can stand it. There 's a person in England who will be kind to me."

"Oh!" remarked Mr. Dane, suddenly dry and taciturn again. I did n't know what had displeased him — unless he was sorry to have my company as far as England; yet somehow I could n't quite believe it was that.

All this talk we had while dodging furious trams and enormous waggons piled with merchandise, in that maelstrom of traffic near the Marseilles docks, which must be passed before we could escape into the country. At last, coasting down a dangerously winding hill with a too suggestively named village at the bottom — L'Assassin — the Aigle turned westward. The chauffeur let her spread her wings at last, and we raced along a clear road, the Etang already shimmering blue before us, like an eye that watched and laughed.

Then we had to swing smoothly round a great circle, to see in all its length and breadth that strange, hidden, and fishy fairy-land of which Martigues is the door. Once the Phœnicians found their way here, looking for salt, which is exploited to this day; Marius camped near enough to take his morning dip in the Etang, perhaps; and Jeanne, queen of Naples, held Martigues for herself. But now only fish, and fishermen, and a few artists occupy themselves in that quaint little world which one passes all regardlessly in the flying "*Côte d'Azur.*"

As we sailed round the road which rings the sleepy-looking salt lake, Lady Turnour had a window opened

on purpose to ask what on earth the Prince of Monaco found to admire in this flat country, where there were no fine buildings? And her rebellion made me take alarm for the success of our future plots. But the chauffeur (anxious for the same reason, maybe, that she should be content) explained things nicely.

Why, said he, for one thing the best fish eaten at the best restaurants of Monte Carlo came out of the Etang de Berre. The *bouillabaise* which her ladyship had doubtless tasted at La Reserve last night, originally owed much to the same source; and talking of *bouillabaise*, Martigues was almost as famous for it as La Reserve itself. One had but to lunch at the little hotel Paul Chabas to prove that. And then, for less material reasons, His Serene Highness might be influenced by the fact that Corot had loved this ring of land which clasped the Etang de Berre — Ziem, too, and other artists whose opinion could not be despised.

These arguments silenced if they did n't convince Lady Turnour, though she had probably never heard of Ziem, or even Corot, and we two in front were able to admire the charming scene in peace. Crossing bridges here and there we saw, rising above sapphire lake and silver belt of olives jewelled with rosy almond blossom, more than one miniature Carcassonne, or ruined castle small as if peeped at through a diminishing glass. There was Port le Bouc, the Mediterranean harbour of the Etang, or watergate to fairyland, as Martigues was the door; Istre on its proud little height; Miramas and Berre, important in their own eyes, and pretty in all others when reflected in the glassy surface of blue water. There

were dark groups of cypresses, like mourning figures talking together after a funeral — ancient trees who could almost remember the Romans; and better than all else, there was Pont Flavian, which these Romans had built.

Even Lady Turnour condescended to get out of the car to do honour to the bridge with its two Corinthian arches of perfect grace and beauty; but she had nothing to say to the poor little, tired-looking lions sitting on top, which I longed to climb up and pat.

She wanted to push on, and her one thought of Aix-en-Provence was for lunch. Was Dane sure we should find anything decent to eat there? Very well, then the sooner we got it the better.

What a good thing there was someone on board the car to appreciate Provence, someone to keep saying — "We 're in Provence — *Provence!*" repeating the word just for the joy and music of it, and all it means of romance and history!

If there had not been someone to say and feel that, every turn of the tyres would have been an insult to Provence, who had put on her loveliest dress to bid us welcome. Among the olives and almonds, young trees of vivid yellow spouted pyramids of thin, gold flame against a sky of violet, and the indefinable fragrance of spring was in the air. We met handsome, up-standing peasants in red or blue *berêts*, singing melodiously in *patois* — Provençal, perhaps — as they walked beside their string of stout cart-horses. And the songs, and the dark eyes of the singers, and the wonderful horned harness which the noble beasts wore with dignity, all seemed to answer us: "Yes, you are in Provence."

We talked of old Provence, my Fellow Worm and I, while our master and mistress wearied for their luncheon; of the men and women who had passed along this road which we travelled. What would Madame de Sévigné, or Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, or George Sand have said if a blue car like ours had suddenly flashed into their vision? We agreed that, in any case, not one of them — or any other person of true imagination — would call abominable a wonderful piece of mechanism with the power of flattening mountains into plains, triumphing over space, annihilating distance; a machine combining fiercest energy with the mildest docility. No, only old fogies would close their hearts to a machine fit for the gods, and pride themselves on being motophobes forever. We felt ourselves, car and all, to be worthy of this magic way, lined with blossoms that played like rosy children among the strange rocks characteristic of Provence — rocks which seemed to have boiled up all hot out of the earth, and then to have vied with each other in hardening into most fantastic shapes. Even we felt ourselves worthy to meet a few troubadours, as we drew near to Aix, where once they held their Courts of Love; and we had talked ourselves into an almost dangerously romantic mood by the time we arrived at the hotel in the Cours Mirabeau.

There, in the wide central *Place*, sprayed a delicious fountain splashed with gold by the sunlight that filtered through an arbour of great trees; and there, too, was a statue of good King René. Perhaps, if I had n't known that Aix-en-Provence was the home of the troubadours, and that its springs had been loved by the Romans before

the days of Christianity, I might not have thought it more charming than many another ancient sleepy town of France; but it is impossible to disentangle one's imagination and sentiment from one's eyesight; therefore, Aix seemed an exquisite place to me.

Now that I knew how knight-errantry in some of its branches was likely to affect Mr. Dane's pocket, I resolved that nothing should tempt me to encourage him in the pursuit. No matter how many flirtatious smiles were shed upon me by enterprising waiters, no matter how many conversations were begun by couriers who took me for rather a superior sample of "young person," I would bear all, all, without a complaint which might seem like a hint for protection.

When Lady Turnour had forgotten me, in the dazzling light that beat about the thought of luncheon, I almost bustled into the hotel, and asked for the servants' dining-room. I knew that there was little hope of eating alone, for several important-looking motor-cars were drawn up before the hotel; but I was hardly prepared for the gay company I found assembled.

Three chauffeurs, a valet, and two maids were lunching, and judging from appearances the meal was far enough advanced to have cemented lifelong friendships. Wine being as free as the air you breathe, in this country of the grape, naturally the big glass *caraffes* behind the plates were more than half empty, and the elder of the two elderly maids had a shining pink knob on her nose.

I had n't yet taken off my diving-bell (as I 've named my head covering), and every eye was upon me during the intricate process of removal. Conversation, which

was in French, slackened in the interests of curiosity; and when the new face was exposed to public gaze the three gallant chauffeurs jumped up, as one man, each with the kind intention of placing me in a chair next himself. *"Voilà une petite tête trop jolie pour être cachée comme ça!"* exclaimed the best looking and boldest of the trio.

The ladies of the party sniffed audibly, and raised their somewhat moth-eaten eyebrows at each other in virtuous disapproval of a young female who provoked such remarks from strangers. The valet, who had the air of being engaged to the maid with the nose, confined himself to a non-committal grin, but the second and third chauffeurs loyally supported their leader. *"Vous avez raison,"* they responded, laughing and showing quantities of white teeth. Then they followed up their compliment by begging that mademoiselle would sit down, and allow her health to be drunk — with that of the other ladies.

"Yes, sit down by me," said Number One, indicating a chair. "This is the Queen's throne."

"By me," said Number Two. "I 'll cut up your meat for you."

"By me," said Number Three. "I 'll give you my share of pudding."

By this time I was red to the ears, not knowing whether it were wiser for a lady's-maid to run away, or to take the rough chaff good-humouredly, and make the best of it. I fluttered, undecided, never thinking of the old adage concerning the woman who hesitates.

In an instant, it was forcibly recalled to my mind, for

Number One chauffeur, smelling strongly of the good red wine of Provence, came forward and offered me his arm.

This was too much.

"Please don't!" I stammered, in my confusion speaking English.

"*Ah, Mademoiselle est Anglaise!*" the two others exclaimed, "*Vive l'entente cordiale!* We are Frenchmen. You are Italian. She belongs to our side."

"Let her choose," said the handsome Italian, pointing his moustache and doing such execution upon me with his splendid eyes, that if they'd been Maxim guns I should have fallen riddled with bullets.

"I 'll sit by nobody," I managed to answer, this time in French. "Please take your seats. I will have a chair at the other end of the table."

"You see, mademoiselle is too polite to choose between us. She 's afraid of a duel," laughed good-looking Number One. "I tell you what we must do. We 'll draw lots for her. Three pellets of bread. The biggest wins."

"Beg your pardon, monsieur," remarked Mr. Dane, whom I had n't seen as he opened the door, "mademoiselle is of my party. She is waiting for me."

His voice was perfectly calm, even polite, but as I whirled round and looked at him, fearing a scene, I saw that his eyes were rather dangerous. He looked like a dog who says, as plainly as a dog can speak, "I 'm a good fellow, and I 'm giving you the benefit of the doubt. But put that bone down, or I bite."

The Italian dropped the bone (I don't mind the simile)

not because he was afraid, I think, but because Mr. John Dane's chin was much squarer and firmer than his; and because such sense of justice as he had told him that the newcomer was within his rights.

"And I beg mademoiselle's pardon," he replied with a bow and a flourish.

"I 'm so glad you 've come — but I ought n't to be, and I did n't expect you," I said, when my chauffeur had pulled out a chair for me at the end of the table farthest from the other maids and chauffeurs.

"Why not?" he wanted to know, sitting down by my side.

"Because I suppose it 's the best hotel in town, and ——"

"Oh, you 're thinking of my pocket! I wish I had n't said what I did last night. Looking back, it sounds caddish. But I generally do blurt out things stupidly. If I did n't, I should n't be 'shuvving' now — only that 's another story. To tell the whole truth, it was n't the state of my pocketbook alone that influenced me last night. I had two other reasons. One was a selfish one, and the other, I hope, unselfish."

"I hope the selfish one was n't fear of being bored?"

"If that 's a question, it does n't deserve an answer. But because you 've asked it, I 'll tell you both reasons. I 'd stopped at La Reserve before, in — in rather different circumstances, and I thought — not only might it make talk about me, but ——"

"I understand," I said. "Of course, Lady Turnour is n't as careful a chaperon as she ought to be."

Then we both laughed, and the danger-signals were

turned off in his eyes. When he is n't smiling, Mr. Dane sometimes looks almost sullen, quite as if he could be disagreeable if he liked; but that makes the change more striking when he does smile.

"You need n't worry about that pocket of mine," he went on, as we ate our luncheon. "It 's as cheap here as anywhere; and when I saw all those motors before the door, I made up my mind that you 'd probably need a brother, so I came as soon as I could leave the car."

"So you are my brother, are you?" I echoed.

"Don't you think you might adopt me, once for all, in that relationship? Then, you see, the chaperoning won't matter so much. Of course, it 's early days to take me on as a brother, but I think we 'd better begin at once."

"Before I know whether you have any faults?" I asked. And just for the minute, the French half of me was a little piqued at his offer. That part of me pouted, and said that it would be much more amusing to travel in such odd circumstances beside a person one could flirt with, than to make a pact of "brother and sister." He might have given me the chance to say first that I 'd be a sister to him! But the American half slapped the French half, and said: "What silly nonsense! Don't be an idiot, if you can help it. The man's behaving beautifully. And it will just do you good to have your vanity stepped on, you conceited little minx!"

"Oh, I 've plenty of faults, I 'll tell you to start with — plenty you may have noticed already, and plenty more you have n't had time to notice yet," said my new relative.

"I 'm a sulky brute, for one thing, and I 've got to be a pessimist lately, for another — a horrid fault, that! — and I have a vile temper ——"

"All those faults might be serviceable in a *brother*," I said. "Though in any one else ——"

"In a friend or a lover, they 'd be unbearable, of course; I know that," he broke in. "But who 'd want me for a friend? And as for a lover, why, I 'm struck off the list of eligibles, forever — if I was ever on it."

After that, we ate our luncheon as fast as we could (a very bad habit, which I don't mean to keep up for man or brother), and even though the others had begun long before we did, we finished while they were still cracking nuts and peeling apples, their spirits somewhat subdued by the Englishman's presence.

"The great folk won't have got their money's worth for nearly an hour yet," said Mr. Dane. "Don't you want to go and have a look at the Cathedral? There are some grand things to see there — the triptych called 'Le Buisson Argent,' and some splendid old tapestry in the choir; a whole wall and some marble columns from a Roman temple of Apollo — oh, and you must n't forget to look for the painting of St. Mitre the Martyr trotting about with his head in his hands. On the way to the Cathedral notice the doorways you 'll pass. Aix is celebrated for its doorways."

(Evidently my brother passed through Aix, as well as along the Corniche, under "different circumstances!")

"You mean — I 'm to go alone?"

"Yes, I can't leave the car to take you. I 'm sorry."

The French half of me was vexed again, but did n't

dare let the sensible American half, which knew he was right, see it, for fear of another scolding.

I thanked him in a way as businesslike as his own, and said that I would take his advice; which I did. Although I hate sightseeing by myself, I would n't let him think I meant to be always trespassing on his good nature; and afterward I was glad I had n't yielded to my inclination to be helpless, for the Cathedral and the doorways were all he had promised, and more. It was a scramble to see anything in the few minutes I had, though, and awful to feel that Lady Turnour was hanging over my head like a sword. The thought of how she would look and what she would say if I kept the car waiting was a string tied to my nerves, pulling them all at once, like a jumping-jack's arms and legs, so that I positively ran back to the hotel, more breathless than Cinderella when the hour of midnight began to strike. But there was the magic glass coach, not yet become a pumpkin; there was the chauffeur, not turned into whatever animal a chauffeur does turn into in fairy stories; and there were not Sir Samuel and her ladyship, nor any sign of them.

"Thank goodness, I 'm not late!" I panted. "I was afraid I was. That dear verger would n't realize that there could be anything of more importance in the world than the statue of Ste. Martha and the Tarasque."

"Nothing is, really," said Mr. Dane, glancing up from some dentist-looking work he was doing in the Aigle's mouth under her lifted bonnet. "But you *are* a little late ——"

"Oh!" I gasped, pink with horror. "You don't mean to say the Turnours have been out, and waiting?"

"I do, but don't be so despairing. I told them I thought I 'd better look the car over, and was n't quite ready. That 's always true, you know. A motor 's like a pretty woman; never objects to being looked at. So they said 'damn,' and strolled off to buy chocolates."

"It 's getting beyond count how many times you 've saved me, and this is only our second day out," I exclaimed. "Here they come now, as they always do, when we exchange a word."

I trembled guiltily, but there was no more than a vague general disapproval in Lady Turnour's eyes, the kind of expression which she thinks useful for keeping servants in their place.

I got into mine, on the front seat; the car's bonnet got into its, the chauffeur into his, and at just three o'clock we turned our backs upon good King René.

The morning had drunk up all the sunshine of the day, leaving none for afternoon, which was troubled with a hint of coming mistral. The landscape began to look like a hastily sketched water-colour, with its hills and terraces of vine; and above was a pale sky, blurred like greasy silver. The wind roamed moaning among the tops of the tall cypresses, set close together to protect the meadows from one of "the three plagues of Provence." And even as the mistral tweaked our noses with a chilly thumb and finger, our eyes caught sight of the second and more dreaded plague: the deceitfully gentle-seeming Durance, which in its rage can come tearing down from the Alps with the roar of a famished lion.

Far above the wide river, the Aigle glided across a high-hung suspension bridge, the song of the water float-

ing up to our ears mingling with the purr of the motor — two giant forces, one set loose by nature, the other by man, duetting harmoniously together, while the wind wailed over our heads. But for the third and last plague of Provence we would have had to search in vain, for the land is no longer tormented by Parliament.

Always the road had stretched before us, up hill after hill, as straight drawn between its scantily grass-covered banks as the parting in an old man's hair; and always, far ahead, wave following wave of hill and mountain had seemed to roll toward us like the sea as we advanced to meet them. After the vineyards had come wild rocks, set with crumbling forts, and towers, and châteaux; then the mild interest of fruit blossom spraying pink and white among primly pollarded olives; then grape country again, with squat, low-growing vines like gnomes kicking up gnarled legs as they turned somersaults; then a break into wonderful mountain country, with Orgon's ruins towering skyward, dark as despair, a wild romance in stone. But before we reached the great suspension bridge, the Pont de Bonpas, the landscape appeared exhausted after its sublime efforts, and inclined to quiet down for a rest. It was only near Avignon that it sprung up refreshed, ready for more strange surprises; and the grim grandeur of the scenery as we approached the ancient town seemed to prophesy the mediæval towers and ramparts of the historic city.

Skirting the huge city wall, the blue car was the one note of modernity; but hardly had we turned in at a great gate worthy to open in welcome for Queen Jeanne of Naples, or Bertrand du Guesclin, than we were in the

hum of twentieth-century life. I resented the change, for one expects nothing, wants nothing, modern in Avignon; but in a moment or two we had left the bright cafés and shops behind, to plunge back into the middle ages. Anything, it seemed, might happen in the queer, shadowed streets of tall old houses with mysterious doorways, through which the Aigle cautiously threaded, like a glittering crochet needle practising a new stitch. Then, in the quiet *place*, asleep and dreaming of stirring deeds it once had seen, we stopped before a dignified building more like some old ducal family mansion than a hotel.

But it was a hotel, and we were to stop the night in it, leaving all sightseeing for the next morning. Lady Turnour was tired. She had done too much already for one day — with a reproachful glance at the chauffeur whom she thus made responsible for her prostration. Nothing would induce her to go out again that evening, and she thought that she would dine in her own sitting-room. She did n't like old places, or old hotels, but she supposed she would have to make the best of this one. She was a woman who *never* complained, unless it really was her duty, and then she did n't hesitate.

This was her mood when getting out of the car, but inside the quaint and charming house a look at the visitors' register changed it in a flash. There was one prince and one duke; there were several counts; and as to barons, they were peppered about in rich profusion. Each noble being was accompanied by his chauffeur, so evidently it was the "thing" to stop in the Hotel de l'Europe, and the *haut monde* considered Avignon worth wasting time upon. Instantly her ladyship resolved

to recover gracefully from her fatigue, and descend to the public dining-room for dinner.

So fascinated was she by the list of great names, that she lingered over the reading of them, as one lingers over the last strawberries of the season; and I had to stand at attention close behind her, with her rugs over my arm, lest any one should miss seeing that she had a maid.

"Dane says the best thing is to make Avignon a centre, and stop here two or three nights, 'doing' the country round, before going on to Nîmes or Arles," she said to Sir Samuel, who was clamouring for the best rooms in the house. "I did n't feel I should like that plan, but thinking it over, I 'm not sure he is n't right."

I knew very well what her "thinking it over" meant!

They stood discussing the pros and cons, and as I did n't yet know the numbers of our rooms, I was obliged to wait till I was told. I was not bored, however, but was looking about with interest, when I heard the teuf-teuf of a motor-car outside. "There goes Mr. Jack Dane with the Aigle," I thought; and yet there was a difference in the sound. I 'm too amateurish in such matters to understand the exact reason for such differences, though chauffeurs say they could tell one make of motor from another by ear if they were blindfolded. Perhaps it was n't our car leaving, but another one coming to the hotel!

I had nothing better to do than to watch for new arrivals. My eyes were lazily fixed on the door, and presently it opened. A figure, all fur and a yard wide, came in.

It was the figure of Monsieur Charretier.

CHAPTER X

FOR a minute everything swam before me, as it used to at the Convent after some older girl had twisted up the ropes of the big swing, with me in it, and let me spin round. Also, I felt as if a jugful of hot water had been dashed over my head. I seemed to feel it trickling through my hair and into my ears.

If I could have moved, I believe I should have bolted like a frightened rabbit, perfectly regardless of what Lady Turnour might think, caring only to dart away without being caught by the man I 'd done such wild deeds to escape. But I was as helpless as a person in a nightmare; and, indeed, it was as unreal and dreadful to me as a nightmare to see that fat, fur-coated figure walking toward me, with the bearded face of Monsieur Charretier showing between turned-up collar and motor-cap surmounted by lifted goggles.

They say you have time to think of everything while you are drowning. I believe that, now, because I had time to think of everything while that furry gentleman took a dozen steps. I thought of all the things he and my cousins had ever done to disgust me with him during his "courtship." I asked myself whether his arrival here was a coincidence, or whether he 'd been tracking me all along, step by step, while I 'd been chuckling to myself over my lucky escape. I thought of what he

would do when he recognized me, and what Lady Turnour would say, and Sir Samuel. And although I could n't see exactly what good he could do in such a situation, I wished vaguely that my brother the chauffeur were on the spot. Then suddenly, with a wild rush of joy, I remembered that I was facing the danger through my little talc window.

Any properly trained heroine of melodrama would have ejaculated "Saved!" but I have n't a tragedy nose, and I gave only a stifled squeak, more like the swan-song of a dying frog than anything more romantic.

Nobody heard it, luckily; and Monsieur Charretier, who had just come into the twilight of the hall from the brighter light out of doors, bustled past the retiring figure of the lady's-maid without a glance. I had even to take a step out of his way, not to be brushed by his fur shoulder, so wide he was in his expensive motoring coat; and trembling from the shock, I awkwardly collided with Lady Turnour. She, in her turn, avoiding my onslaught as if I 'd been a beggar in rags, stepped on Monsieur Charretier's toe.

He exclaimed in French, she apologized in English.

He bowed a great deal, assuring madame that she had not inconvenienced him. She accused her maid, whose stupidity was in fault; and because each one looked to the other rich and prosperous they were extremely polite to one another. Even then, though her ladyship snapped at me, "What *has* come over you, Elise? You 're as clumsy as a cow!" he had no notice to waste upon the *femme de chambre*. Yet I dared not so much as murmur, "Pardon!" lest he should recognize my voice.

Fortunately my mistress and her husband were now ready to go up to their rooms, and we left Monsieur Charretier engaging quarters for himself and his chauffeur. Evidently he was going to stop all night; but from his indifference to me I judged joyfully that he had not come to the hotel armed with information concerning my movements. He might be searching for his lost love, but he did n't know that she was at hand.

All my pleasure in the thought of sightseeing at Avignon was gone, like a broken bubble. I should n't dare to see any sights, lest I should be seen. But stopping indoors would n't mean safety. Lady's-maids can't keep their rooms without questions being asked; and if I pretended to be ill, very likely Lady Turnour would discharge me on the spot, and leave me behind as if I were a cast-off glove. Yet if I flitted about the corridors between my mistress's room and mine, I might run up against the enemy at any minute.

I tried to mend the ravelled edges of my courage by reminding myself that Monsieur Charretier could n't pick me up in his motor-car, and run off with me against my will; but the argument was n't much of a stimulant. To be sure, he could n't use violence, nor would he try; but if he found me here he would "have it out" with me, and he would tell things to Lady Turnour which would induce her to send me about my business with short shrift.

He could say that I 'd run away from my relatives, who were also my guardians, and altogether he could make out a case against me which would look a dark brown, if not black. Then, when Lady Turnour and Sir Samuel

had washed their hands of me, and I was left in a strange hotel, practically without a sou — unless the Turnours chose to be inconveniently generous, and packed me off with a ticket to Paris — I should find it very difficult to escape from my Corn Plaster admirer. This time there would be no kind Lady Kilmarny to whom I could appeal.

Between two evils, one chooses that which makes less fuss. It was n't as intricate to risk facing Monsieur Charretier as it was to eat soap and be seized with convulsions; so I went about my business, waiting upon her ladyship as if I had not been in the throes of a mental earthquake. She was not particularly cross, because the gentleman whose acquaintance I had thrust upon her might turn out to be Somebody, in which case my clumsiness would be a blessing in disguise; but if she had boxed my ears I should hardly have felt it.

Bent upon dazzling the eyes of potentates in the dining-room, and outshining possible princesses, the lady was very particular about her dress. Although the big luggage had gone on by train to some town of more importance (in her eyes) than Avignon, she had made me keep out a couple of gowns rather better suited for a first night of opera in Paris than for dinner at the best of provincial hotels. She chose the smarter of these toilettes, a black *chiffon* velvet embroidered with golden tiger-lilies, and filled in with black net from shoulder to throat. Then the blue jewel-bag was opened, and a nodding diamond tiger-lily to match the golden ones was carefully selected from a blinding array of brilliants, to glitter in her masses of copper hair. Round her neck went a rope of pearls that fell to the waist whose slenderness I had just, with a

mighty muscular effort, secured; but not until she had dotted a few butterflies, bats, beetles and other scintillating insects about her person was she satisfied with the effect. At least, she was certain to create a sensation, as Sir Samuel proudly remarked when he walked in to get his necktie tied by me — a habit he has adopted.

"I wonder if I ought to trust Elise with my bag?" Lady Turnour asked him, anxiously, at last. "So far, since we 've been on tour, I 've carried it over my arm everywhere, but it does n't go very well with a costume like this. What do you think?"

"Why, I think that Elise is a very good girl, and that your jewels will be perfectly safe with her if you tell her to take care of the bag, and not let it out of her sight," replied Sir Samuel, evidently embarrassed by such a question within earshot of the said Elise.

"Perhaps I 'd better have dinner in my own room, so as to guard it more carefully?" I suggested, brightening with the inspiration.

"That 's not necessary," answered her ladyship. "You can perfectly well eat downstairs, with the bag over your arm, as I have done for the last two days. I don't intend to pay extra for you to have your meals served in your room on any excuse whatever."

I could n't very well offer to pay for myself. That would have raised the suspicion that I had hidden reasons of my own for dining in private, and I regretted that I had n't held my tongue. Lady Turnour ostentatiously locked the receptacle of her jewels with its little gilded key, which she placed in a gold chain-bag studded with rubies as large as currants; and then, reminding me that

I was responsible for valuables worth she did n't know how many thousands, she swept away, leaving a trail of white heliotrope behind.

In any case I would wait, I thought, until I could be tolerably certain that all the guests of the hotel had gone down to dinner. If I knew Monsieur Charretier, he would be among the first to feed, but I could n't afford to run needless risks. I lingered over the task of putting my mistress's belongings in order, almost with pleasure, and then, once in my own room, I took as long as I could with my own toilet. I was ready at last, and could think of no further excuse for pottering, when suddenly it occurred to me that I might do my hair in a demurer, less becoming way, so that, if I should have the ill luck to encounter a sortie of the enemy, I might still contrive to pass without being recognized.

I pinned a clean towel round my neck, barber fashion, and pulling the pins out of my hair, shook it down over my shoulders. But before I could twist it up again, there came a light tap, tap, at the door.

"There!" I thought. "Some one has been sent to tell me the servants' dinner will be over if I don't hurry. Perhaps it 's too late already, and I 'm *so* hungry!"

I bounced to the door, and threw it wide open, to find Mr. John Dane standing in the passage, holding a small tray crowded with dishes.

"Here you are," he said, in the most matter-of-fact way, as if bringing meals to my door had been a fixed habit with him, man and boy, for years. "Hope I have n't spilt anything! There 's such a crush in our feeding place that I thought you 'd be safer up here. So

I made friends with a dear old waiter chap, and said I wanted something nice for my sister."

"You did n't!" I exclaimed.

"I did. Do you mind much? I understood it was agreed that was our relationship."

"No, I don't mind much," I returned. "Thank you for everything." I shook back a cloud of hair, and glanced up at the chauffeur. Our eyes met, and as I took the tray my fingers touched his. His dark face grew faintly red, and then a slight frown drew his eyebrows together.

"Why do you suddenly look like that?" I asked. "Have I done anything to make you cross?"

"Only with myself," he said.

"But why? Are you sorry you 've been kind to me? Oh, if you only knew, I need it to-night. Go on being kind."

"You 're not the sort of girl a man can be kind to," he said, almost gruffly, it seemed to me.

"Am I ungrateful, then?"

"I don't know what you are," he answered. "I only know that if I looked at you long as you are now I should make an ass of myself — and make you detest or despise me. So good night — and good appetite."

He turned to go, but I called him back. "Please!" I begged. "I 'll only keep you one minute. I 'm sure you 're joking, big brother, about being an ass, or poking fun at me. But I don't care. I need some advice so badly! I 've no one but you to give it to me. I know you won't desert me, because if you were like that you would n't have come to stop at this hotel to watch over your

new sister — which I 'm sure you did, though that may sound ever so conceited."

"Of course I won't desert you," he said. "I could n't — now, even if I would. But I 'll go away till you 've had your dinner, and — and made yourself look less like a siren and more like an ordinary human being — if possible. Then I 'll run up and knock, and you can come out in the passage to be advised."

"A siren — with a towel round her neck!" I laughed. "If I should sing to you, perhaps you might say ——"

"Don't, for heaven's sake, or there would be an end of — your brother," he broke in, laughing a little. "It would n't need much more." And with that he was off.

He is very abrupt in his manner at times, certainly, this strange chauffeur, and yet one's feelings are n't exactly hurt. And one feels, somehow, as I think the motor seems to feel, as if one could trust to his guidance in the most dangerous places. I 'm sure he would give his life to save the car, and I believe he would take a good deal of trouble to save me; indeed, he has already taken a good deal of trouble, in several ways.

When he had gone I set down the tray, shut the door, and went to see how I really did look with my hair hanging round my shoulders. My ideas on the subject of sirenhood are vague; but I must confess, if the creatures are like me with my hair down, they must be quite nice, harmless little persons. I admire my hair, there 's so much of it; and at the ends, a good long way below my waist, there 's such a thoroughly agreeable curl, like a yellow sea-wave just about to break. Of course, that sounds very vain; but why should n't one admire one's

own things, if one has things worth admiring? It seems rather ungrateful to Providence to cry them down; and ingratitude was never a favourite vice with me.

One would have said that the chauffeur knew by instinct what I liked best to eat, and he must have had a very persuasive way with the waiter. There was crême d'orge, in a big cup; there were sweetbreads, and there was lemon meringue. Nothing ever tasted better since my "birthday feasts" as a child, when I was allowed to order my own dinner.

My room being on the first floor, though separated by a labyrinth of quaint passages from Lady Turnour's, there was danger in a corridor conversation with Mr. Dane at an hour when people might be coming upstairs after dinner; but he was in such a hurry to escape from me that I had no time to explain; and I really had not the heart to make myself hideous, by way of disguise, as I 'd planned before his knock at the door. As an alternative I put on a hat, pinning quite a thick veil over my face, and when the expected tap came again, I was prepared for it.

"Are you going out?" my brother asked, looking surprised, when I flitted into the dim corridor, with Lady Turnour's blue bag dutifully slipped on my arm.

"No," I answered. "I 'm *hiding*. I know that sounds mysterious, or melodramatic, or something silly, but it 's only disagreeable. And it 's what I want to ask your advice about." Then, shamefacedly when it came to the point, I unfolded the tale of Monsieur Charretier.

"By Jove, and he 's in this house!" exclaimed the chauffeur, genuinely interested, and not a bit sulky.

"You have n't an idea whether he 's been actually tracking you?"

"If he has, he must have employed detectives, and clever ones, too," I said, defending my own strategy.

"Is he the sort of man who would do such a thing — put detectives on a girl who 's run away from home to get rid of his attentions?"

"I don't know. I only know he has no idea of being a gentleman. What can you expect of Corn Plasters?"

"Don't throw his corn plasters in his face. He might be a good fellow in spite of them."

"Well, he is n't — or with them, either. He may be acting with my cousin's husband, who values him immensely, and wants him in the family."

"Is he very rich?"

"Disgustingly," said I, as I had said to Lady Kilmarny.

"Yet you bolted from a good home, where you had every comfort, rather than be pestered to marry him?"

"Oh, what do you call a 'good home,' and 'every comfort'? I had enough to eat and drink, a sunny room, decent clothes, and was n't allowed to work except for Cousin Catherine. But that is n't my idea of goodness and comfort."

"Nor mine either."

"Yet you seem surprised at me."

"I was thinking that, little and fragile as you look — like a delicate piece of Dresden china — you 're a brave girl."

"Oh, thank you!" I cried. "I do love to be called 'brave' better than anything, because I 'm really such a coward. You don't think I 've done wrong?"

"No-o. So far as you 've told me."

"What, don't you believe I 've told you the truth?" I flashed out.

"Of course. But do women ever tell the whole truth to men — even to their brothers? What about that kind friend of yours in England?"

"What kind friend?" I asked, confused for an instant. Then I remembered, and — almost — chuckled. The conversation I had had with him came back to me, and I recalled a queer look on his face which had puzzled me till I forgot it. Now I was on the point of blurting out: "Oh, the kind friend is a Miss Paget, who said she 'd like to help me if I needed help," when a spirit of mischief seized me. I determined to keep up the little mystery I 'd inadvertently made. "I know," I said gravely. "*Quite* a different kind of friend."

"Some one you like better than Monsieur Charretier?"

"*Much* better."

"Rich, too?"

"Very rich, I believe, and of a noble family."

"Indeed! No doubt, then, you are wise, even from a worldly point of view, in refusing the man your people want you to marry, and taking — such extreme measures not to let yourself be over persuaded," said Mr. Dane, stiffly, in a changed tone, not at all friendly or nice, as before. "I meant to advise you not to go on to England with Lady Turnour, as the whole situation is so unsuitable; but now, of course, I shall say no more."

"It was about something else I wanted advice," I reminded him. "But I suppose I must have bored you. You suddenly seem so cross."

"I am not in the least cross," he returned, ferociously. "Why should I be? — even if I had a right, which I have n't."

"Not the right of a brother?"

"Hang the rights of a brother!" exclaimed Mr. Dane.

"Then don't you want to be my brother any more?"

He walked away from me a few steps, down the corridor, then turned abruptly and came back. "It is n't a question of what I want," said he, "but of what I can have. Sometimes I think that after all you 're nothing but an outrageous little flirt."

"Sometimes? Why, you 've only known me two days. As if you could judge!"

"Far be it from me to judge. But it seems as though the two days were two years."

"Thank you. Well, I may be a flirt — the French side of me, when the other side is n't looking. But I 'm not flirting with *you*."

"Why should you waste your time flirting with a wretched chauffeur?"

"Yes, why? Especially as I 've other things to think of. But I don't *want* your advice about those things now. I would n't have it even if you begged me to. You 've been too unkind."

"I beg your pardon, with all my heart," he said, his voice like itself again. "I 'm a brute, I know! It 's that beastly temper of mine, that is always getting me into trouble — with myself and others. Do forgive me, and let me help you. I want to very much."

"I just said I would n't if you begged."

"I don't beg. I insist. I 'll inflict my advice on you,

whether you like it or not. It 's this: get the man out of Avignon the first thing to-morrow morning."

"That 's easy to say!"

"And easy to do — I hope. What would be his first act, do you think, if he got a wire from you, dated Genoa, and worded something like this: 'Hear you are following me. I send this to Avignon on chance, to tell you persecution must cease or I will find means to protect myself. Lys d'Angely.' "

"I think he 'd hurry off to Genoa as fast as he could go — by train, leaving his car, or sending it on by rail. But how could I date a telegram from Genoa?"

"I know a man there who ——"

"Elise, I 'm astonished at you!" exclaimed the shocked voice of Lady Turnour. "Talking in corridors with strange young men! and you 've been out, too, without my permission, and *with* my jewel-bag! How dare you?"

"I have n't been out," I ventured to contradict.

"Then you were going out ——"

"And I had no intention of going out ——"

"Don't answer me back like that! I won't stand it. What are you doing in your hat, done up in a thick veil, too, at this time of night, as if you were afraid of being recognized?"

I had to admit to myself that appearances were dreadfully against me. I did n't see how I could give any satisfactory explanation, and while I was fishing wildly in my brain without any bait, hoping to catch an inspiration, the chauffeur spoke for me.

"If your ladyship will permit me to explain," he began,

more respectfully than I 'd heard him speak to anyone yet, " it is my fault ma'mselle is dressed as she is."

"What on earth is he going to say?" I wondered wildly, as he paused an instant for Lady Turnour's consent, which perhaps an amazed silence gave. I believed that he did n't know himself what to say.

"I wanted your ladyship's maid, when she had nothing else to do, to put on her out-of-door things and let me make a sketch of her for an illustrated newspaper I sometimes draw for. Naturally she did n't care for her face to go into the paper, so she insisted upon a veil. My sketch is to be called, 'The Motor Maid,' and I shall get half a guinea for it, I hope, of which it 's my intention to hand ma'mselle five shillings for obliging me. I hope your ladyship does n't object to my earning something extra now and then, so long as it does n't interfere with work?"

"Well," remarked Lady Turnour, taken aback by this extraordinary plea, as well she might have been, "I don't like to tell a person out and out that I don't believe a word he says, but I do go as far as this: I 'll believe you when I see you making the sketch. And as for earning extra money, I should have thought Sir Samuel paid good enough wages for you to be willing to smoke a pipe and rest when your day's work was done, instead of gadding about corridors gossiping with lady's-maids who 've no business to be outside their own room. But if you 're so greedy after money — and if you want me to take Elise's word ——"

"I 'll just begin the sketch in your ladyship's presence, if I may be excused," said Mr. Dane, briskly. And to

my real surprise, as well as relief, he whipped a small canvas-covered sketch-book out of his pocket. It was almost like sleight of hand, and if he 'd continued the exhibition with a few live rabbits and an anaconda or two I could n't have been much more amazed.

"I 'd like to have a look at that thing," observed Lady Turnour, suspiciously, as in a business-like manner he proceeded to release a neatly sharpened pencil from an elastic strap.

Without a word or a guilty twitch of an eyelid he handed her the book, and we both stood watching while the fat, heavily ringed and rosily manicured fingers turned over the pages.

He could sketch, I soon saw, better than I can, though I 've (more or less) made my living at it. There were types of French peasants done in a few strokes, here and there a suggestion of a striking bit of mountain scenery, a quaint cottage, or a ruined castle. Last of all there was a very good representation of the Aigle, loaded up with the Turnours' smart luggage, and ready to start. My lips twitched a little, despite the strain of the situation, as I noted the exaggerated size of the crest on the door panel. It turned the whole thing into a caricature; but luckily her ladyship missed the point. She even allowed her face to relax into a faint smile of pleasure.

"This is n't bad," she condescended to remark.

"I thought of asking your ladyship and Sir Samuel if there would be any objection to my sending that to a Society motoring paper, and labelling it 'Sir Samuel and Lady Turnour's new sixty-horse-power Aigle on tour

in Provence.' Or, if you would prefer my not using your name, I ——"

"I see no reason why you should *not* use it," her ladyship cut in hastily, "and I 'm sure Sir Samuel won't mind. Make a little extra money in that way if you like, while we 're on the road, as you have this talent."

She gave him back the book, quite graciously, and the chauffeur began sketching me. In three minutes there I was — the "abominable little flirt!" in hat and veil, with Lady Turnour's bag in my hand, quite a neat figure of a motor maid.

"You may put, if you like, 'Lady Turnour's maid,'" said that young person's mistress, "if you think it would give some personal interest to your sketch for the paper."

"Oh, this is for quite a different sort of thing," he explained. "Not devoted to society news at all: more for caricatures and *funny* bits."

"Oh, then I should certainly not wish my name to appear in *that*," returned her ladyship, her tone adding that, on the other hand, such a publication was as suitable as it was welcome to a portrait of *me*.

"Now, Elise, I wish you to take those things off at *once*, and come to my room," she finished. "Mind, I don't want you should keep me waiting! And you can hand over that bag."

No hope of another word between us! Mr. Jack Dane saw this, and that it would be unwise to try for it. Pocketing the sketch-book, he saluted Lady Turnour with a finger to the height of his eyebrows, which gesture visibly added to her sense of importance. Then, without glancing at me, he turned and walked off.

It was not until he had disappeared round the bend of the corridor that her ladyship thought it right to leave me.

I knew that she had made this little expedition in search of her maid with the sole object of seeing what the mouse did while the cat was away — a trick worthy of her lodging-house past! And I knew equally well that before I tapped at her door a little later she had examined the contents of the blue bag to make sure that I had extracted nothing. How I pity the long procession of "slaveys" who must have followed each other drearily in that lodging-house under the landlady's jurisdiction. They, poor dears, could have had no chauffeur friends to save them from daily perils, and it is n't likely that their mistress allowed such luxuries as postmen or policemen.

CHAPTER XI

I DECIDED to have my breakfast very early next morning, and would have thought it a coincidence that Mr. Dane should walk into the couriers' room at the same time if he had n't coolly told me that he had been lying in wait for me to appear.

"I thought, for several reasons, you would be early," he said. "So, for all the same reasons and several more, I thought I 'd be early too. I had to know what the situation was to be."

"The situation?" I repeated blankly.

"Between us. Am I to understand that we 've quarrelled?"

"We had," I said. "But even on good grounds, it 's difficult to keep on quarrelling with a person who has not only brought up your dinner and sauced it with good advice, but saved you from — from the *dickens* of a scrape."

"I hope she did n't row you any more afterward?"

"No. She was too much interested, all the time I was undressing her, in speculating about Monsieur Charretier to Sir Samuel. It seems that they struck up an acquaintance over their coffee on the strength of a little episode in the hall.

"Inadvertently I introduced them — threw them at each others' heads. Monsieur Charretier — Alphonse,

as he once asked me to call him! — told her he was on his way to Cannes, where he heard that a friend of his, whom it was very necessary for him to see, was visiting a Russian Princess. He had stopped in Avignon, he said, because he was expecting the latest news of the friend, a change of address, perhaps; and — I don't know who proposed it, but anyway he arranged to go with Sir Samuel and Lady Turnour to the Palace of the Popes at ten o'clock. Her ladyship was quite taken with him, and remarked to Sir Samuel that there was nothing so fascinating as a French gentleman of the *haut monde.* Also she pronounced his broken English '*sweet.*' She wondered if he was married, and whether the friend in Cannes was a woman or a man. Little did she know that her maid could have enlightened her! Their joining forces here is, as my American friend Pamela would say, 'the *limit.*' "

"Don't worry. The Palace of the Popes won't see him to-day," said the chauffeur. "He 's gone. Got a telegram. Did n't even wait for letters, but told the manager to forward anything that came for him, Poste Restante, Genoa."

"Oh, then you ——"

"Acted for you on my own responsibility. There was nothing else to do, if *anything* were to be done; and you 'd seemed to fall in with my suggestion. It would have been a pity, I thought, if your visit to Avignon were to be spoiled by a thing like that."

"Meaning Monsieur Charretier? I hardly slept last night for dwelling on the pity of it."

"It 's all right, then? I have n't put my foot into it?"

"Your foot! You 've put your *brains* into it. You said the other night that I had presence of mind. It was nothing to yours."

"All 's forgotten and forgiven, then?"

"It 's forgotten that there was anything to forgive."

"And the 'motor maid' business? You did n't think it too clumsy?"

"I thought it most ingenious."

"It was n't a lie, you know. I have n't a happy talent for lying. I do, or rather did when I had nothing else on hand, send occasional sketches to a paper. But the more I look at my 'motor maid,' the more I feel I should like to keep her — in my sketch-book — if you 're willing I should have her?"

"Then I don't get my promised five shillings?" I laughed.

"I 'll try and make up the loss to you in some other way."

"I have you to thank that I did n't lose my situation. So the debt is on my side."

"You owe me the scolding you got. I ought n't to have lured you into the corridor."

"It was on my business. And there was no other way."

"It was my business to have thought of some other way."

"Are you your sister's keeper?"

"I wish I—— Look here, mademoiselle *ma sœur*, I 'm all out of repartees. Perhaps I shall be better after breakfast. I shall be able to eat, now that I know you 've forgiven me."

"I don't believe you would care if I had n't," I

exclaimed. "You are so stolid, so phlegmatic, you Englishmen!"

"Do you think so? Well, it would have been a little awkward for me to have taken you about on a sight-seeing expedition this morning if we were at daggers drawn — no matter how appropriate the situation might have been to Avignon manners of the Middle Ages, when everybody was either torturing everybody else or fighting to the death."

"*Are* you going to take me about?"

"That 's for you to say."

"Is n't it for Lady Turnour to say?"

"Sir Samuel told me last night that I should n't be wanted till two o'clock, as he was going to see the town with her ladyship. He wanted to know if we could sandwich in something else this afternoon, as he considered a whole day too much for one place. I suggested Vaucluse for the afternoon, as it 's but a short spin from Avignon, and I just happened to mention that her ladyship might find use for you there, to follow her to the fountain with extra wraps in case of mistral. I thought, of all places you 'd hate to miss Vaucluse. And we 're to come back here for the night."

I feared that Monsieur Charretier's sudden disappearance might upset the Turnours' plans, but Mr. Dane did n't think so. He had impressed it upon Sir Samuel that no motorist who had not thoroughly "done" Avignon and Vaucluse would be tolerated in automobiling circles.

He was right in his surmise, and though her ladyship was vexed at losing a new acquaintance whom it would have been "nice to know in Paris," she resigned herself

for the morning to the society of husband and Baedeker. It was kind old Sir Samuel's proposal that I should be left free to do some sight-seeing on my own account while they were gone (I had meant to break my own shackles); and though my lady laughed to scorn the idea that a girl of my class should care for historical associations, she granted me liberty provided I utilized it in buying her certain stay-laces, shoe-strings, and other small horrors for which no woman enjoys shopping.

When she and Sir Samuel were out of the way, as safely disposed of as Monsieur Charretier himself, I felt so extravagantly happy in reaction, after all my worries, that I danced a jig in her ladyship's sacred bedchamber.

Then I prepared to start for my own personally conducted expedition; and this time I took no great pains to do my hair unbecomingly. Naturally, I did n't want to be a jarring note in harmonious Avignon, so I made myself look rather attractive for my jaunt with the chauffeur.

He was sauntering casually about the *Place* before the hotel, where long ago Marshal Brune was assassinated, and we walked away together as calmly as if we had been followed by a whole drove of well-trained chaperons. When one has joined the ranks of the lower classes, one might as well reap some advantages from the change!

"What we 'll do," said Mr. Dane, "is to look first at all the things the Turnours are sure to look at last. By that plan we shall avoid them, and as I know my way about Avignon pretty well, you may set your mind at rest."

I can think of nothing more delightful than a day in

Avignon, with an agreeable brother and — a mind at rest. I had both, and made the most of them.

When her ladyship's shoe-strings and stay-laces were off my mind and in my coat pocket, we wandered leisurely about the modern part of the wonderful town, which has been busier through the centuries in making history than almost any other in France. Seen by daylight, I no longer resented the existence of a new — comparatively new — Avignon. The pretty little theatre, with its dignified statues of Corneille and Molière, seemed to invite me kindly to go in and listen to a play by the splendidly bewigged gentlemen sitting in stone chairs on either side of the door. The clock tower with its "Jacquemart" who stiffly struck the quarter hours with an automatic arm, while his wife criticized the gesture, commanded me to stop and watch his next stroke; and the curiosity shops offered me the most alluring bargains. People we met seemed to have plenty of time on their hands, and to be very good-natured, as if rich Provençal cooking agreed with their digestions.

Sure that the Turnours would be at the Palace of the Popes or in the Cathedral, we went to the Museum, and searched in vain among a riot of Roman remains for the tomb of Petrarch's Laura, which guide-books promised. In the end we had to be satisfied with a memorial cross made in the lovely lady's honour by order of some romantic Englishmen.

"Yet you say we 're stolid and phlegmatic!" muttered Mr. Dane, as he read the inscription. (Evidently that remark had rankled.)

We had not a moment to waste, but the Turnours had

to be avoided; so my brother proposed that we combine profit with prudence, and take a cab along the road leading out to Port St. André. Where the ancient tower of Philippe le Bel crowns a lower slope I should have my first sight of that grim mountain of architecture, the Palace of the Popes. It was the best place from which to see it, if its real grandeur were to be appreciated, he said — or else to go to Villeneuve, across the Rhône, which we dared not steal time to do; but the Turnours were certain not to think of anything so esoteric in the way of sight-seeing.

The vastness of the stupendous mass of brick and stone took my breath away for an instant, as I raised my eyes to look up, on a signal of "Now!" from Mr. Dane. It seemed as if all the history, not alone of Old Provence, but of France, might be packed away behind those tremendous buttresses.

Of what romances, what tragedies, what triumphs, and what despairs could those huge walls and towers tell, if the echoes whispering through them could crystallize into words!

There Queen Jeanne of Naples — that fateful Marie Stuart of Provence — stood in her youth and beauty before her accusers, knowing she must buy her pardon, if for pardon she could hope. There the wretched Bishop of Cahors suffered tortures incredible for plots his enemies vowed he had conceived against the Pope. There came messages from Western Kings and Eastern Emperors; there Bertrand du Guesclin, my favourite hero, was excommunicated: and there great Rienzi lay in prison.

"Now I think we might risk going to the Palace," said

Mr. Dane, when we had stood gazing in silence for more minutes than we could well afford. So we made haste back, and walked up to the Rochers des Doms, where we lurked cautiously in the handsome modern gardens, glorying in the view over the old and new bridges, and to far off Villeneuve, where the Man in the Iron Mask was first imprisoned. When we had admired the statue of Althen the Persian, with his hand full of the beneficent madder that did so much for Provence, we were rewarded for our patience by seeing Sir Samuel and Lady Turnour rush out from the Papal Palace, looking furious.

"They look like that, because they 've been inside," said the chauffeur. "Their souls are n't artistic enough to resent consciously the ruin and degradation of the place, but even they can be depressed by the hideous whitewashed barracks which were once splendid rooms, worthy of kings. You will look as they do if you go in."

"I hope my cheeks would n't be dark purple and my nose a pale lilac!" I exclaimed.

"You 're twenty, at most, and Lady Turnour 's forty-five, at least," said my brother. "You can stand the pinch of Mistral; but the inside of that noble old pile is enough to turn the hair gray. It would be much more original to let your imagination draw the picture."

"Then I will!" I cried, knowing that nothing pleases a man more in a girl than taking his advice. By the lateness of the hour we judged that the Turnours must have visited the Cathedral before they "did" the Palace, so we went boldly on to Notre Dame des Doms, beloved of Charlemagne.

No wonder, I said, that he had thought it worth restoring from the ruins Saracens had left! Nothing could be more glorious than the situation of the historic church, once first in importance, perhaps, in all Christendom; and nothing could be more purely classic than the west porch. We strained the muscles of our necks staring up at ancient, fading frescoes, and rested them again in gazing at famous tombs; then it was time to go, if we were not to start for Vaucluse too hungry to feed satisfactorily on thoughts of Laura and Petrarch.

"Now to our own trough with the other beasts," I sighed. "What an anti-climax! From the cathedral to the couriers' dining-room."

"I thought that we might have our own private trough, just this once, if you don't object," said the chauffeur, almost wistfully. "It would be a shame to spoil the memory of a perfect morning, would n't it, so don't you think you might accept my humble invitation?"

I hesitated.

"Is it conventionality or economy that gives you pause?" he asked. "If it 's the latter, or rather a regard for my pocket, your conscience can be easy. My pocket feels heavy and my heart light to-day. I remember a little restaurant not far off where they do you in great style for a franc or two. Will you come with me?"

He looked quite eager, and I felt myself unable to resist temptation. "Yes," said I, "and thank you."

A biting wind, more like March than flowery April, nearly blew us down into the town, and I was glad to find shelter in the warm, clean little restaurant.

"*Is* my nose lilac after all?" I inquired, when a dear

old smiling waiter had trotted off with our order, murmuring benevolently, "Doude de zuide, M'sieur," like a true compatriot of Tartarin.

"A faint pink from the cheeks is undeniably reflected upon it," admitted the chauffeur. "We 're going to be let in for a cold snap as we get up north," he went on. "I read in the papers this morning that there 's been a 'phenomenal fall of snow for the season' on the Cevennes and the mountains of Auvergne. Do you weaken on the Gorges of the Tarn now I 've told you that?"

"Mine not to reason why. Mine but to do or die," I transposed, smiling with conspicuous bravery.

"Not at all. It 's yours to choose. I have n't even broken the Gorges, yet, to the slaves of my hypnotic powers. I warn you that, if all the papers say about snow is true, we may have adventures on the way. Would you rather ——"

"I 'd rather have the adventures," I broke in, and had as nearly as possible added "with you," but I stopped myself in time.

We lunched more gaily than double-dyed millionaires, and afterward, while my host was paying away his hard-earned francs for our food, I slipped out of the restaurant and into a little shop I had noticed close by. The window was full of odds and ends, souvenirs of Avignon; and there were picture-postcards, photographs, and coins with heads of saints on them. In passing, on the way to lunch, I 'd noticed a silver St. Christopher, about the size of a two-franc piece; and as the Aigle carries the saint like a figure-head, a glittering, golden statuette six

or seven inches high, I had guessed that St. Christopher must have been chosen to fill the honourable position of patron saint for motors and motorists.

"What 's the price of that?" I asked, pointing to the coin.

It was ten francs, a good deal more than I could afford, more than half my whole remaining fortune. "Could not madame make it a little cheaper?" I pleaded with the fat lady whose extremely aquiline nose proclaimed that she had no personal interest in saints. But no, madame could not make it cheaper; the coin was of real silver, the figure well chased; a recherché little pocket-piece, and a great luck-bringer for anybody connected with the automobile. No accident would presume to happen to one who carried *that* on his person. Madame had, however, other coins of St. Christopher, smaller coins in white metal which could scarcely be told from silver. If mademoiselle wished to see them ——"

But mademoiselle did not wish to see them. It would be worse than nothing to give a base imitation. Instead of feeling flattered, St. Christopher would have a right to be annoyed, and perhaps to punish. Recklessly I passed across the counter ten francs, and made the coveted saint mine. Then I darted out, just in time to meet Mr. Dane at the door of the restaurant.

"This is for you," I said. "It 's to give you luck."

I pressed the coin into his hand, and he looked at it on his open palm. For an instant I was afraid he was going to make fun of it, and my superstition concerning it, which I could n't quite deny if cross-questioned. But his smile did n't mean that.

"You 've just bought this — to give to me?" he asked.

"Yes," I nodded.

"Why? Not because you want to 'pay me back' for asking you to lunch — or any such villainous thing, I hope, because ——"

I shook my head. "I did n't think of that. I got it because I wanted to bring you luck."

Then he slipped the coin into an inside pocket of his coat. "Thank you," he said. "But did n't I tell you that you 'd brought me something better than luck already?"

"What *is* better than luck?"

"An interest in life. And the privilege of being a brother."

CHAPTER XII

IT WOULD be a singularly hard-headed, cold-hearted person who could set out for Vaucluse without the smallest thrill; and hard heads and cold hearts don't "run in our family." As we spun away from the Hotel de l'Europe soon after two o'clock that afternoon I felt that I was largely composed of thrill. Cold as the wind had grown, the thrill kept me warm, mingling in my veins with ozone.

Inside the car the middle-aged honeymooners had an air of desperate resignation which the consciousness of doing their duty according to Baedeker gives to tourists. The tap was turned on in the newly invented heating-apparatus in the car floor, through which hot water from the radiator can be made to circulate; and I wondered, if this extreme measure were resorted to already, what would be left to do when we reached those high, white altitudes of which the chauffeur had been speaking. I prayed that Lady Turnour might not read in the papers about the "phenomenal fall of snow" in those regions, for if she did I was afraid that even Mr. Dane's magnetic powers of persuasion might fail to get her there. He might dangle Queen Margherita of Italy over her head in vain, if worst came to worst: for what are queens to the most inveterate tuft-hunters if the feet be cold? Yet now that "adventures" were

vaguely prophesied, I felt I could not give up the promised gorges and mountains.

Out of Avignon we slid, past the old, old ramparts and the newer but impressive walls, and turned at the right into the Marseilles road. "Vaucluse!" said a kilometre-stone, and then another and another repeated that enchanted and enchanting word, as we flew onward between the Rhône and the Durance.

This was our own old way again, as far as the Pont de Bonpas; then our road wound to the northeast, away from the world we knew — I said to myself — and into a world of romance, a world created by the love of Petrarch for Laura, and sacred to those two for ever more.

The ruined castle, with machicolated towers and haughty buttresses, on the great rampart of a hill, was for me the porter's lodge at the entrance gate of an enchanted garden, where poetic flowers of love bloomed through seasons and centuries; laurels, roses, and lilies, and pansies for remembrance. We did n't see those flowers with our bodies' eyes, but what of that? What did it matter that to the Turnours in their splendid glass cage this was just a road, with queer little gnome dwellings scooped out of solid rock to redeem it from commonplaceness, with a fringe of deserted cottages farther on, and some ugly brickworks? My spirit's eyes saw the flowers, and they clustered thicker and brighter about Pieverde, where I insisted to Mr. Dane that Laura had been born.

He was inclined to dispute this at first, and bring up the horrid theory that the pure white star of Petrarch's life had been a mere Madame de Sade, with a drove of

uninteresting children. But eagerly I quoted Petrarch himself, using all the arguments on which Pamela and I prided ourselves at the Convent; and by the time we had got as far as that sweet "little Venice full of water wheels," L'Isle, I 'd persuaded him to agree with me. In the midst of all that lovely, liquid music of running, trickling, fluting water, who could go on callously insisting that Laura resisted Petrarch merely because she was a fat married woman with a large family?

All was green and pastoral here, and we seemed to have come into eternal spring after the bleak, windy plains encircling Avignon. It was beautiful to remember Petrarch's description of his golden-haired, dark-eyed love, fair and tall as a lily, sitting in the grass among the violets, where her bare feet gleamed whiter than the daisies when she took off her sandals. Even Nicolete, flower of Provençal song, had no whiter feet than Laura, I am sure!

We were slipping past the banks of a little river, clear as sapphires and emeralds melted and mingled together. The sound of its singing drowned the sound of the motor, so that we seemed to glide toward Vaucluse noiselessly and reverently.

At the Inn of Petrarch and Laura the car had to stop; and looking up, we could see on the height above the castle home of Petrarch's dearest friend, Philippe de Cabassole, guardian of Queen Jeanne of Naples. Up there on the cliff Petrarch's eyes must often have turned toward Pieverde with longing thoughts of Laura, that "white dove" who was always for him sixteen, as when he met her first.

No farther than the inn could any wheeled thing go; and having justified my presence by buttoning Lady Turnour up in her coat, and finding her muff under several rugs, I stood by the car, gazing after the couple as they trudged off along the path to the hidden fairy fountain of Vaucluse. When they should have got well ahead I meant to go too, for if a cat may look at a king, a lady's maid may try to drink — if she can — a few drops from the cup of a great poet's inspiration. A first I resented those two ample, richly clad, prosaic backs marching sturdily toward the magic fountain; then suddenly the back of Sir Samuel became pathetic in my eyes. Had n't he, I asked myself, loved his Emily ("Emmie, pet," as I 've heard him call her) as long and faithfully as Petrarch loved his Laura? Perhaps, after all, he had earned the right to visit this shrine.

Rocks shut out from our sight the distant fountain, and the last windings of the path that led to it, clasping the secret with great stone arms, like those of an Othello jealously guarding his young wife's beauty from eyes profane.

"Are n't you going now?" asked my brother, with a certain wistfulness.

"Ye-es. But what about you?"

"Oh, I 've been here before, you know."

"Don't you believe in second times? Or is a second time always second best?"

"Not when —— Of course I want to go. But I can't leave the car alone."

My eyes wandered toward the inn door. "There 's a boy there who looks as if he were born to be a

watch-dog," said I, basely tempting him. "Could n't you ——"

"No, I could n't," he said decidedly. "At a place like this, where there are a lot of tourists about, it would n't be right. It was different at Valescure, when I took you in to lunch."

"You mean I must n't make that a precedent."

"I don't mean anything conceited."

"But you won't desert Mr. Micawber. I believe I shall name the car Micawber! Well, then, I must go by myself — and if I should fall into the fountain and be drowned ——"

"Don't talk nonsense, and don't do anything foolish," said Mr. Dane, sternly, whereupon I turned my back upon him, and plunged into the cool shadows of the gorge. The great white cliff of limestone was my goal, and always it towered ahead, as I followed the narrow pathway above the singing water. I sighed as I paused to look at a garden which maybe once was Petrarch's, for it was sad to find my way to fairyland, alone. Even a brother's company would have been better than none, I thought!

Soon I met my master and mistress coming back.

There was nothing much to see, said her ladyship, sharply, and I must n't be long; but Sir Samuel ventured to plead with her.

"Let the girl have ten minutes or so, if she likes, dear," said he. "We 'll be wanting a cup of hot coffee at the inn. And it is a pretty place." There was something in his voice which told me that he would have felt the charm — if his bride had let him.

Pools of water, deep among the rocks, were purple-pansy colour or beryl green; but the "Source" itself, in its cup of stone, was like a block of malachite. There was no visible bubbling of underground springs fighting their way up to break the crystal surface of the fountain, — this fountain so unlike any other fountain; but to the listening ear came a moaning and rushing of unseen waters, now the high crying of Arethusa escaping from her pursuing lover, now rich, low notes as of an organ played in a vast cavern.

Above the gorge, the towering rocks with their huge holes and archways hollowed out by turbulent water in dim, forgotten ages, looked exactly as if the whole front wall had been knocked off a giant's castle, exposing its secret labyrinths of rough-hewn rooms, floor rising above floor even to the attics where the giant's servants had lived, and down to the cellars where the giant's pet dragons were kept in chains.

I had n't yet exhausted my ten minutes, though I began to have a guilty consciousness that they would soon be gone, when I heard a step behind me, and turning, saw Mr. Dane.

"They 're having coffee in the car," he said. "Sir Samuel proposed it to his wife, as if he thought it would be rather more select and exclusive for her than drinking it in the inn; but I have a sneaking suspicion that it was because he wanted to let me off. Not a bad old boy, Sir Samuel."

So we saw the fountain of Vaucluse together, after all. I don't know why that should have seemed important to me, but it did — a little.

We did n't say much to each other, all the way back to Avignon, but I felt that the day had been a brilliant success, and was sure that the next could not be as good. "What — not with St. Remy and Les Baux?" exclaimed my brother. But I knew very little about St. Remy, and still less about Les Baux. For a minute I was ashamed to confess, but then I told myself that this was a much worse kind of vanity than being pleased with the colour of one's hair or the length of one's eyelashes. Mr. Jack Dane was too polite to show surprise at my ignorance; but that evening, just as I was getting ready to go down to dinner, up he came with a tray, as he had the night before; and on the tray, among covered dishes, was a book.

"Two of your chauffeur-admirers from Aix are in the dining-room," he said, "so I thought you 'd rather stop up in your room and read T. A. Cook's 'Old Provence,' than go downstairs. Anyway, it will be better for you."

I was half angry, half flattered that he should arrange my life for me in this off-hand way, whether I liked it or not; but the French half of me will do almost anything rather than be ungracious; and it would have been ungracious to say I was tired of dining in my room, and could take care of myself, when he had given himself the trouble of carrying up my dinner. So I swallowed all less obvious emotions than meek gratitude for food, physical and mental; and was soon so deeply absorbed in the delightful book that I forgot to eat my pudding. I sat up late with it — the book, not the pudding — after putting Lady Turnour to bed (almost literally, because she thinks it refined to be helpless), and when

morning came I was no longer disgracefully ignorant of St. Remy and Les Baux.

Mr. Dane had mapped out the programme of places to see, using Avignon as a centre, and there were so many notabilities at the Hotel de l'Europe following the same itinerary, with insignificant variations, that Lady Turnour was quite contented with the arrangements made for her.

Morning was for St. Remy; afternoon was for Les Baux, "because the thing is to see the sunset there," I heard her telling an extremely rich-looking American lady, laying down the law as if she had planned the whole trip herself, with a learned reason for each detail.

The way to St. Remy was along a small but pretty country road, which had a misleading air, as if it did n't want you to think it was taking you to a place of any importance. And yet we were in the heart of Mistral-land; not Mistral the east wind, but Mistral the poet of Provence, great enough to be worthy of the land he loves, great enough to carry on the glory of it to future generations. At any moment we might meet a Fellore. I looked with interest at each man we saw, and some looked back at me with flattering curiosity; for a woman's eyes are almost as mysterious behind a three-cornered talc window as behind a yashmak, or zenana gratings.

St. Remy itself — birthplace of Nostradamus, maker of powders and prophecies — was charming in the sunlight, with its straight avenue of trees like the pillars of a long gray and green corridor in a vast palace; but we swept on toward the "Plateau des Antiquities," up a

steep slope with St. Remy the modern at our backs; then suddenly I found myself crying out with delight at sight of the splendid Triumphal Archway and the gracious Monument we had come out to see.

Both looked more Greek than Roman, but that was because Greek workmen helped to build them for Julius Cæsar, when he determined that posterity should not forget his defeat of great Vercingetorix, and should do justice to the memory of Marius.

When I was small I used to dislike poor Vercingetorix, and be glad that he had to surrender, so that I might be rid of him, owing to the dreadful difficulty of pronouncing his name; but when we had got out of the car, and I saw him on the archway, a tall, carved captive, who had kept his head through all the centuries, while Cæsar (with a hand on the prisoner's shoulder) had lost his, my heart softened to him for the first time.

I thought the Triumphal Monument to Marius even more beautiful than the Archway, and felt as angry as Marius must, that the guide-books should take it away from the hero and wrongfully call it a mausoleum for somebody else. But Mr. Dane assured me with the obstinate air people have when learned authorities back their opinions, that the Arch was really the more interesting of the two — the first Triumphal Archway set up outside Italy, said he, and bade me reflect on that; still, I would turn my eyes toward the graceful monument, so wickedly annexed by the three Julii, and then away over the wide plain that lay beneath this ragged spur of the Alpilles. In the distance I could see Avignon,

and the pale, opal-tinted, gold-veined hills that fold in the fountain of Vaucluse. Never, since we came into Provence, had I been able so clearly to realize the wild fascination of her haggard beauty. "Here Marius stood in his camp," I thought, "shading his eyes from the fierce sun, and looking out over this strange, arid country for the Barbarians he meant to conquer." My heart beat with an intoxicating excitement, such as one feels on seeing great mountains or the ocean for the first time; and then down I tumbled, with a bump, off my pedestal, when Lady Turnour wanted to know what I supposed she 'd brought me for, if not to put on her extra cloak without waiting to be told.

Watches are really luxuries, not necessities, with the Turnours, because their appetites always strike the hour of one, and if they 're sometimes a little in advance, they can be relied upon never to be behindhand. I knew before I glanced at the little bracelet-watch Pamela gave me (hidden under my sleeve) that it must be on the stroke of half-past twelve when her ladyship began to complain of the sharp wind, and say we had better be getting back to St. Remy. She was cross, as usual when she is hungry, and said that if I continued to go about "like a snail in a dream" whenever she fetched me to carry her things on these short expeditions, she would leave me in the hotel to mend her clothes; whereupon I became actually servile in my ministrations. I brushed a microscopic speck of dust off her gown; I pushed in a hairpin; I tucked up a flying end of veil; I straightened her toque, and made myself altogether indispensable; for the bare idea of being left behind was a box on the ear. I could not

endure such a punishment — and the front seat would look so empty, so unfinished, without me!

As we went back down the steep hill from old Glanum, St. Remy appeared a little oasis of spring in the midst of a winter which had come back for something it had forgotten. All its surrounding orchards and gardens, screened from the shrewish Mistral by the shoulders of the Alpilles, and again by lines of tall cypress trees and netted, dry bamboos, had begun to bloom richly like the earlier gardens on the Riviera. There was a pinky-white haze of apple blossoms; and even the plane trees in the long main street were hung with dainty, primrose-coloured spheres, like little fairy lanterns. Not only did every man seem a possible Felibre, but every girl was a beauty. Some of them wore a charming and becoming head-dress, such as I never saw before, and the chauffeur said it was the head-dress of the women of Arles, where we would go day after to-morrow.

Impertinent chauffeurs or couriers would have been more out of place in poetic St. Remy than the sensational Nostradamus himself; and there was no trouble of that sort for me in lunching at the pleasant, quiet hotel. Mr. Dane had bought a French translation of Mistral's "Memoires," and as we ate, he and I alone together, he read me the incident of the child-poet and his three wettings in quest of the adored water-flowers. Nothing could be more beautiful than the wording of the exquisite thoughts, yet I wished we could have seen those thoughts embodied in Provençal, the language practically created by Mistral, as Italian was by Dante and Petrarch, or German by Goethe.

Not far away lay Mas du Juge, described in the book, where he was born, and Maillane, where he lives, and I longed to drive that way; but as the Turnours would be sure to say that there was nothing to see, the chauffeur thought it wiser not to turn out of our road. We might find the poet at Arles, perhaps, in his museum there, or lunching at the Hotel du Forum, a favourite haunt of his on museum days.

Starting for Les Baux, we turned our faces straight toward the wild little mountains loved by Mistral, his dear Alpilles. They soon surrounded us in tumbling gray waves, piled up on either side of the road as the Red Sea must have tumultuously fenced in the path of the Israelites. Strange, hummocky mountains were everywhere, as far as we could see; mountains of incredible, nightmare shapes, and of great ledges set with gigantic busts of ancient heroes, some nobly carved, some hideously caricatured, roughly hewn in gray limestone, or red rock that looked like bronze. On we went, climbing up and up, a road like a python's back; but not yet was there any glimpse of the old "robber fortress" of Les Baux about which I had read, and later dreamed, last night. I knew it would be wonderful, astonishing, a Dead City, a Pompeii of the Feudal Age, yet different from any other ancient town the whole world over — a place of tangled histories; yet I tried vainly to picture what it would be like. Then, suddenly, we reached a turn in that strange road which, if it had led downhill instead of up, would have seemed like the way Orpheus took to reach Hades.

We had come face to face with a huge chasm in the

rock, a gap with sheer walls sliced clean down, like a cut in a great cheese; and I felt instinctively that this must be the dark doorway through which we should see Les Baux.

Through the cut in the stone cheese our road carried us; and the busts on the rocky ledges were so near now we could almost have put out our hands and touched them — but curiously enough, in this place of all others, they were the likenesses of modern men. Mr. Dane and I picked out an unmistakable Gladstone on the right, a characteristic Beaconsfield on the left; and farther on Mr. Chamberlain's head was fantastically grafted on to the body of a prehistoric animal. We were just tracing Pierpont Morgan's profile, near a few of Hannibal's elephants, when the car sprang clear of the chasm, out upon the other side of the doorway; and there rose before us Les Baux, a hundred times more wonderful, more tragic, than I had hoped to find it.

Far, far below our mountain road lay a valley so flat that it might have been levelled on purpose for the tilting of knights in great tournaments. Above and around us (for suddenly we were in as well as under it) was a City of Ghosts.

Huge masses of rock, like Titan babies' playthings, had been hollowed out for dwellings, fit houses for our late cousins the cave-dwellers. There were colossal pillars and dark, high doorways such as one sees in pictures of the temples at Thebes; but all this, said Mr. Jack Dane, was merely a preface for what was yet to come, only an immense quarry whence the stones to build Les Baux had been torn. We were still on the road to the real Les

Baux; and even as he spoke, the Aigle was clawing her way bravely up a hill steeper than any we had mounted. At the top she turned abruptly, and stopped in a queer, forlorn little place, where to my astonishment our journey ended in front of a small house ambitiously named Hotel Monte Carlo. Then I remembered the story I had read: how a young prince of the Grimaldi family came begging Louis XIII. to protect him from Spain; how Louis, who did n't want Spain to grab Monaco, promptly gave soldiers; how the Grimaldi's shrewd wit did more to get the Spanish out of the little principality than did the fighting men from France; and how Louis, as a reward, turned poor, war-worn Les Baux into a Grimaldi marquisate.

That little episode in history accounted for the Hotel Monte Carlo; and I wondered if it were put up on the site of the Grimaldis' miniature pleasure-palace, which the forest-burning revolutionists tore down just before Les Baux, after all its strange passings from hand to hand, became the property of the nation.

Against the rocks a few mean houses leaned apologetically, but on every side rose the ruins of a proud, dead past: a past beginning with the ruts of chariot-wheels graven on the rock-paved street. I thought, as I looked at the sordid little village of to-day, which had crawled into the very midst of the fortress, of some words I 'd read last night: "a rat in the heart of a dead princess."

Strange, haggard hill, whispered about by history ever since Christians ran before Alaric the Visigoth, and hid in its caverns already echoing with legends of mysterious Phœnician treasure! Strange robber house of Les Baux,

founded thirteen hundred years ago, and claiming half Provence two centuries later! No wonder, after all the fighting and plundering, loving and hating, that all it asks now is for its bleached, picked bones to be left in peace!

I thought this, standing by the little Hotel Monte Carlo, waiting for my mistress and her husband to be supplied with a guide. He was the most intelligent and efficient-seeming guide imaginable, who looked as if he had the whole history of Les Baux behind his bright dark eyes; and I hoped that the humble maid and chauffeur might be allowed to follow the "quality" within respectful earshot.

Soon they began to walk on, and I turned to look at my brother, who was lingering by the car. Already the guide had begun to be interesting. I caught a few words: "Celtic caverns" — "Leibulf, the first Count" — "the terrible Turenne, called the 'Fléau de Provence' — the Lady Alix's guardian" — which made me long to hear more; but I did n't want to crawl on until my Fellow Worm could crawl with me.

"I can't go," he said. "It would n't do to leave the car here. There are several gipsy faces at the inn window, you see. Why there should be gipsies I don't know; but there are, for those are gipsies or I 'll eat my cap. And I 've got to keep watch on deck."

"How horrid to leave you here alone, seeing nothing — not even the sunset!" I exclaimed. "I think I shall stop with you, unless *she* calls me ——"

"You 'll do nothing of the kind," he had begun, when the summons came, sooner than I had expected.

CHAPTER XIII

"ELISE, come here and put what this guide is saying into English," was the command, and I flew to obey. To hear him tell what he knew was like turning over the leaves of the Book of Les Baux; and I tried to do him justice in my translation; but it was disheartening to see Lady Turnour's lack-lustre gaze wander as dully about the rock-hewn barracks of Roman soldiers as if she had been in her own lodging-house cellar, and to be interrupted by her complaints of the cold wind as we went up the silent streets, past deserted palaces of dead and gone nobles, toward the crown of all — the Château.

Nothing moved her to any show of interest in this grave of mighty memories, of mighty warrior princes, and of lovely ladies with names sweet as music and perfume of potpourri. Wandering in a splendid confusion of feudal and mediæval relics — walls with carved doorways, and doorways without walls; beautiful, purposeless columns whose occupation had long been gone; carved marvels of fireplaces standing up sadly from wrecked floors of fair ladies' boudoirs or great banqueting halls, the stout, painted woman broke in upon the guide's story to talk of any irrelevant matter that jumped into her mind. She suddenly bethought herself to scold Sir Samuel about "Bertie," from whom a letter had evidently

been forwarded, and who had been spending too much money to please her ladyship.

"That stepson of yours is a regular bad egg," said she.

"Never you mind," retorted Sir Samuel, defending his favourite. "Many a bad egg has turned over a new leaf."

My lip quivered, but I fixed my eyes firmly upon the guide, who was now devoting his attention entirely to his one respectful listener. I was ashamed of my companions, but I could n't help catching stray fragments of the conversation, and the involuntary mixing of Bertie's affairs with the Religious Wars, and the destruction of Les Baux by Richelieu's soldiers, had a positively weird effect on my mind. Bertie, it seemed — (or was it Richelieu?) was invited to visit at the château of a French marquis called de Roquemartine (or was it good King René, who inherited Les Baux because he was a count of Provence?), and the château was near Clermont-Ferrand. Lady Turnour was of opinion that it would be well to make a condition before sending the cheque which Bertie wanted to pay his bridge debts (or was he in debt because the Lady Douce and her sister Stephanette of Les Baux had quarrelled?). If the advice of Dane, the chauffeur, were taken, they would be motoring to Clermont-Ferrand; and why not say to Bertie: "No cheque unless you get us an invitation to visit the Roquemartines while you are there?" (Or was it that they wanted an invitation to the boudoir of Queen Jeanne, René's beloved wife, who lived at Les Baux sometimes, and had very beautiful things around her — tapestries and Eastern rugs, and wondrous rosaries, and jewelled Books

of Hours?) Really, it was very bewildering; but in my despair one drop of comfort fell. That château near Clermont-Ferrand would prove a lodestar, and help Mr. Jack Dane to lure the Turnours through chill gorges and over snowy mountains.

"Lodestar" really was a good word for the attraction, I thought, and I would repeat it to the chauffeur. But it rose over the horizon of my intellect probably because the guide talked of Countess Alix, last heiress of the great House of Les Baux. "As she lay dying," he said, "the star that had watched over and guided the fortunes of her house came down from the sky, according to the legend, and shone pale and sad in her bedchamber till she was dead. Then it burst, and its light was extinguished in darkness for ever."

Eventually Sir Samuel's eye brightened for the Tudor rose decoration, in the ruined château, relic of an alliance between an English princess and the House of Les Baux; and Lady Turnour did n't interrupt once when the guide told of the latest important discovery in the City of Ghosts. "Near the altar of the Virgin here," he began, in just the right, hushed tone, "they found in a tomb the body of a beautiful young girl. There she lay, as the tomb was opened, just for an instant — long enough for the eye to take in the picture — as lovely as the loveliest lady of Les Baux, that famed princess Cecilie, known through Provence as Passe-Rose. Her long golden hair was in two great plaits, one over either shoulder, and her hands were crossed upon her breast, holding a Book of Hours. But in a second, as the air touched her, she was gone like a dream; her sweet young face, white as milk, and half

smiling, her long dark eyelashes, even the Book of Hours, all crumbled into dust, fine as powder. Only the golden hair, tied with blue ribbon, was left; and when you go to Arles you can see it in the Museum of Monsieur Mistral."

"Make a note of hair for Arles, Sam," said her ladyship, gravely; and just as solemnly he obeyed, scribbling a few words in the pocket memorandum-book in which the poor man industriously puts down all the things which his wife thinks he ought to remember.

"Anything else interesting ever been found here?" she wanted to know. "Any jewels or things of that sort?"

I passed the question on to the guide.

Many things had been found, he said: coins, vases, pottery, and mosaics. Occasionally such things were turned up, though usually, nowadays, of no great value; but it was the hope of finding something which brought the gipsies. Often there were gypsies at Les Baux. They would go to Les Saintes Maries, the place of the sacred church where the two sainted Maries came ashore from Palestine in their little boat, and they would pray to Sarah, whose tomb was also in that wonderful church. Had we seen it yet? No? But it was not far. Many people went, though the great day was on May twenty-fourth, when the Archbishop of Aix lowered the ark of relics from the roof, and healed those of the sick who were true believers. It was for Sarah, though, that the gipsies made their pilgrimages. They thought that prayers at her tomb would bring them whatever they desired; and sometimes, when they were able to come on as far as

Les Baux, they would wish at the tomb to find the buried Phœnician treasure, for which many had searched generation after generation, since history began, but none had ever found.

I did not say anything about the gipsies at the inn-window, but I saw now that Mr. Dane had done wisely in sticking to his post. A sixty-horse-power Aigle might largely make up for a disappointment in the matter of treasure, even if she had to be towed down into the valley by a horse.

"Calvé, and all the great singers, come here sometimes by moonlight in their motors," went on the guide, "after the great musical festival of Orange in the month of August. They stand on the piles of stone among the ruins when all is white under the moon, and they sing — ah! but they sing! It is wonderful. They do it for their own pleasure, and there is no audience except the ghosts — and me, for they allow me to listen. Yet I think, if our eyes could be opened to such things, we would see grouped round a noble company of knights and ladies — such a company as would be hard to get together in these days."

"Well, I would rather sing here in August than April!" exclaimed Lady Turnour, with the air of a spoiled prima donna. And then she shivered and wanted to go down to the car without waiting for the sunset, which, after all, could only be like any other mountain sunset, and she could see plenty of better ones next summer in Switzerland. She felt so chilled, she was quite anxious about herself, and should certainly not dare to start for Avignon until she had had a glass of steaming hot rum punch

or something of that sort, at the inn. Did the guide think she could get it — and have it sent out to her in the car, as nothing would induce her to go inside that little den?

The guide thought it probable that something hot might be obtained, though there might be a few minutes' delay while the water was made to boil, as it would be an unusual order.

A few minutes! thought I, eagerly, looking at the sun, which was hurrying westward. I knew what "a few minutes" at such an inn would mean — half an hour at least; and apparently I was no longer needed as an interpreter. Without a thought of me, now that I had ceased to be useful, Lady Turnour slipped her arm into her husband's for support (her high-hecled shoes and the rough, steep streets had not been made for each other), and began trotting down the hill, in advance of the guide. They had finished with him, too, and were already deep in a discussion as to whether rum punch, or hot whisky-and-water with sugar and lemon were better, for warding off a chill. I did n't see why I should n't linger a little on the wide plateau, with the Dead City looming above me like a skeleton seated on a ruined throne, and half southern France spread out in a vast plain, a thousand feet below.

It was wonderful there, and strangely, almost terribly still. Once the sea had washed the feet of the cliff, dim ages ago. Now my eyes had to travel far to the Mediterranean, where Marseilles gloomed dark against the burnished glimmer of the water. I could see the Etang de Berre, too, and imagine I saw the Aurelian Way, and

gloomy old Aigues-Mortes, which we were to visit later. At lunch we had talked of a poem of Mistral's, which a friend of Mr. Dane's had put into French — a poem all about a legendary duel. And it was down there, in that far-stretching field, that the duel was fought.

As I looked I realized that the clouds boiling up from some vast cauldron behind the world were choking the horizon with their purple folds. They were beautiful as the banners of a royal army advancing over the horizon, but — they would hide the sun as he went down to bathe in the sea. He was embroidering their edges with gold now. I was seeing the best at this moment. If I started to go back, I should have time to pause here and there, gazing at things the Turnours had hurried past.

I went down slowly, reluctantly, the melancholy charm of the place catching at my dress as I walked, like the supplicating fingers of a ghost condemned to dumbness. There was one rock-hewn house I had wanted to see, coming up, which Lady Turnour had scorned, saying "when you 've been in one, you've been in all." And she had not understood the guide's story of a legend that was attached to this particular house. Perhaps if she had she would not have cared; but now I was free I could n't resist the temptation of going in, to poke about a little. You could go several floors down, the guide had said; that was certain, but the tale was, that a secret way led down from the lowest cellar of this cave house, continuing — if one could only find it — to the enchanted cavern far below, where Taven, the witch, kept and cured of illness the girl loved by Mireio.

I did n't know who Mireio was, except that he lived in

songs and legends of Old Provence, but the story sounded like a beautiful romance; and then, the guide had added that some people thought the Kabre d'Or, or Phœnician treasure, was hidden somewhere between Les Baux and the "Fairy Grotto," or the "Gorge of Hell," near by.

Caves have always had the most extraordinary, magical fascination for me. When I was a child, I believed that if I could only go into one I should be allowed to find fairyland; and even in an ordinary, every-day cellar I was never quite without hope. The smell of a cellar suggested the most cool, delightful, shadowy mysteries to me, at that time, and does still.

It was as if the ghostly hand that had been pulling me back, begging me not to leave Les Baux, led me gently but insistently through the doorway of the rock house.

It was not yet dark inside. I tiptoed my way through some rough bits of debris, to the back of the big room, crudely cut out of stone. There were shelves where the dwellers had set lights or stored provisions, and there was nothing else to see except a square hole in the floor, below which a staircase had been hewn. A glimmer of light came up to me, gray as a bat's wing, and I knew that there must be some opening for ventilation below.

I felt that I would give anything to go down those rough stone stairs, only half way down, perhaps; just far enough to see what lay underneath. It was as if Taven herself had called me, saying: "Come, I have something to show you."

I put a foot on the first step, then the other foot wanted a chance to touch the next step, and so on, each demanding

its own turn in fairness. I had gone down eight steps, counting each one, when I heard a faint rustling noise. I stopped, my heart giving a jump, like a bird in a cage.

There were no windows in the underground room, which was much smaller and less regular in shape than the one above, but a faint twilight seemed to rain down into it in streaks, like spears of rain, and I guessed that holes had been made in the rock to give light and ventilation. Something alive was down there, moving. I was frightened; I hardly dared to look. And I had a nightmare feeling of being struck dumb and motionless. I tried to turn and run up the stairs; but I had to look, and the gray filtering light struck into a pair of eyes.

CHAPTER XIV

THEY were great black eyes, sunken into the face of an old woman. She stood in a corner, and it occurred to me that she had perhaps run there, as much afraid of me as I was of her. No eyes were ever like those, I thought, except the eyes of a gipsy.

"What are you doing?" I stammered, in French, hardly expecting her to understand and answer me; but she replied in an old, cracked voice that sounded hollow and unreal in the cavern.

"I have been asleep," she said. "I am waiting for my sons. We are in Les Baux on business. I thought, when I heard you, it was my boys coming to fetch me. I can't go till they are here, because I have dropped my rosary with a silver crucifix down below, and the way is too steep for me. They must get it."

"Do they know you are here?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she returned. "They will come at six. We shall perhaps have our supper and sleep in this house to-night. Then we will go away in the morning."

"It is only a little after five now," I told her. "You frightened me at first."

She cackled a laugh. "I am nothing to be afraid of," she chuckled. "I am very old. Besides, there is no harm in me. If you have the time, I could tell your fortune."

"I 'm afraid I have n't time," I said, though I was tempted. To have one's fortune told in a cavern under a rock house where Romans had lived, told by a real, live gipsy who looked as if she might be a lineal descendant from Taven, and who was probably fresh from worshipping at the tomb of Sarah! It would be an experience. No girl I knew, not even Pam herself, who is always having adventures, could ever have had one as good as this. If only I need not miss it!

"It would take no more than five minutes," she pleaded in her queer French, which was barely understandable, and evidently not the tongue in which she was most at home.

"Well, then," I said, hastily calculating that it was no more than ten minutes since Lady Turnour and Sir Samuel left me, and that the water for their punch could n't possibly have begun to boil yet. "Well, then, perhaps I might have five minutes' fortune, if it does n't cost too much; but I 'm very poor — poorer than you, maybe."

"That cannot be, for then you would have less than nothing," said the old woman, cackling again. "But it is your company I like to have, more than your money. I have been waiting here a long time, and I am dull. No fortune can be expected to come true, however, unless the teller's hand be crossed with silver, otherwise I might give it you for nothing. But a two-franc piece ——"

"I think I have as much as that," I cut her short, as she paused on the hint; and deciding not to ask her, as I felt inclined, to come to the upper room lest we should be interrupted, I went down the remaining five or six

high steps, and got out my purse under a long, straight rod of gray light.

There were only a few francs left, but I would have beggared myself to buy this adventure, and thought it cheap at the price she named. I found a two-franc piece — a bright new one, worthy of its destiny — and looking up as I shut my purse, I saw the old woman's eyes fixed on me, and sharp as gimlets. Used to the dusk now, I could see her dark face distinctly, and so like a hungry crow did she look that I was startled. But it was only for a second that I felt a little uncomfortable. She was so old and weak, I was so young and strong, that even if she were an evil creature who wanted to do me harm, I could shake her off and run away as easily as a bird could escape from a tied cat.

"Make a cross with the silver piece on my palm," she said.

I did as she told me, and it was a dark and dirty palm, in the hollow of which seemed to lie a tiny pool of shadow. Her eyes darted to the bracelet-watch as my wrist slipped out of the protecting sleeve, and I drew back my hand quickly. She plucked the coin from my fingers, and then told me to give her my left hand.

"You can't see the lines," I said. "It 's too dark."

"I see with my night eyes," she answered, as a witch might have answered. "And I feel. I have the quick touch of the blind. I can feel the pores in a flower-petal."

Impressed, I let her hold my hand in one of her lean claws while she lightly passed the spread fingers of the other down the length of mine from the tips to the joining

with the palm, and then along the palm itself, up and down and across. It was like having a feather drawn over my hand.

"You have foreign blood in your veins," she said. "You are not all French. But you have the charm of the Latin girl. You can make men love you. You make them love you whether you wish or not, and whether *they* wish or not. Sometimes that is a great trouble to you. You are anxious now, for many reasons. One of the reasons is a man, but there is more than one who loves you. You make one of them unhappy, and yourself unhappy, too. The man you ought to love is young and handsome, and dark — very dark. Do not think ever of marrying a fair man. You are on a journey now. Something very unexpected will happen to you at the end — something to do with a man, and something to do with a woman. Be careful then, for your future happiness may depend on your actions in a moment of surprise. You are not rich, but you have a lucky hand. You could find things hidden if you set yourself to look for them."

"Hidden treasure?" I asked, laughingly, and venturing to break in because she was speaking slowly now, as if she had come to the end of her string of prophecies.

"Perhaps. Yes. If you looked for the hidden treasure here, you might be the one to find it after all these hundreds of years. Who knows? These things happen to the lucky ones."

"Well, if I believed that I 'd been born for such luck, I 'd try to come back some day, and have a look," I said. "I should begin in this house, I think."

"It is never so lucky to return for things as to try and get them at the right time," the old woman pronounced. "If you would like to wait till my sons come ——"

"No, I would n't," I said. "I must go now."

"If you would at least do me a favour, for the good fortune I have told you so cheap," she begged. "I, who in my day have had as much as two louis from great ladies who would know their fortune!"

"What is the favour?" I asked.

"Oh, it is next to nothing. Only to go down to the foot of the stairs in the cellar below this, and pick up my rosary, which I dropped, and which I know is lying there."

"It 's too dark," I said. "I could n't see to find it — and you said your sons were coming soon."

"Not soon enough, for when you are gone, and I am alone, I should like to pray at the time of vespers. And it is not so dark as you think. Besides, this will be the test of the fortune I have just told you. If it 's true that you have the lucky hand for finding you will put it on the rosary in an instant. That will be a sign you can find anything. Unless you are afraid, mademoiselle ——"

"Of course I 'm not afraid," I said, for I always have been ashamed of my fear of the dark, and have forced myself to fight against it. "If the rosary is at the foot of the staircase I 'll try and get it for you, but I won't go any farther."

Her corner was close by the opening where more steps were cut into the rock. I could see the bottom, I thought, and started down quickly, because I was in a hurry to come back and be on my way home — to the Aigle.

Six, seven steps, and then — crash! down I came on my hands and knees.

Oh, how it hurt! And how it made my head ring! Fireworks went off before my eyes, and I felt stupid, inclined to lie still. But suddenly the idea flashed into my brain, like lightning darting among dark clouds, that the old woman had made me do this thing on purpose. She had played me a trick — and if she had, she must have some bad reason for doing it. Those two sons of hers! I scrambled up, shocked and jarred by the fall, my hands and knees smarting as if they were skinned.

"I 've fallen down," I cried. "Do you hear?"

No answer.

I called again. It was as still as a grave up above. It seemed to me that it could not be so unnaturally, so inhumanly still, if there were a living, breathing creature there. I was sure now that the horrible old thing had known what would happen, had wanted it to happen, and had gone hobbling away to fetch her wicked gipsy sons. How she had looked at my poor little purse! How she had looked at Pamela's watch!

I saw now how it was that I had been so stupid. The dim light from above had lain on the last step and made it appear as if the floor were near; but there was a gap between the stairway and the bottom of the cellar. The lower steps had been hewn away — perhaps in a quest for the ever-elusive treasure. Maybe a crack had appeared, and people, always searching, had suspected a secret opening and tried to find it. Anyway, there was the gap, and there was a rough pile of broken stone

not far off, which had once been the end of the rocky stairway. It was lucky that I had n't struck my forehead against it in falling — the only bit of luck which the fortune-teller had brought me!

As it was, I was not seriously hurt. Perhaps I had torn my dress, and I should certainly have to buy a new pair of gloves, whether I could afford them or not; otherwise I did n't think I should suffer, except for a few black-and-blue patches. But how was I to get out of this dark hole? That was the question. I was too hot with anger against the sly old fox of a woman, who had pretended that she wanted to say her prayers, to feel the chill of fear; but I could n't help understanding that she had got me into this trap with the object of annexing my watch and purse or anything else of value. Perhaps the gipsy sons would rob me first, and then murder me, rather than I should live to tell; but if they meant to do that they would have to come and be at it soon, or I should be missed and sought.

This last fancy really did turn me cold, and the nice hot anger which had kept me warm began to ooze out at my fingers and toes. I thought of my brave new brother, who would fight ten gipsy men to save me if he only knew; and then I wanted to cry.

But that would be the silliest thing I could do. Soon they would begin to look for me (oh, how furious Lady Turnour would be that I should dare keep her waiting, and at the fuss about a servant!) and if I screamed at the top of my voice maybe some one would hear.

I took a long breath, and gave vent to a blood-curdling shriek which would have made the fortune of an actress

on the stage. Odd! I could n't help thinking of that at the time. One thinks of queer things at the most inappropriate moments.

It was a glorious howl, but the rock walls seemed to catch it as a battledore catches a shuttlecock, and send it bounding back to me. I knew then that a cry from those depths would not carry far; and the fear at my heart gave a sharp, rat-like bite.

If I could scramble up! I thought; and promptly tried.

It looked almost easy; but for me it was impossible. A very tall woman might have done it, perhaps, but I have only five foot four in my Frenchiest French heels; and the broken-off place was higher than my waist. With good hand-hold I might have dragged myself up, but the steps above did not come at the right height to give me leverage; and always, though I tried again and again, till my cut hands bled, I could n't climb up. And how silly it seemed, the whole thing! I was just like a young fly that had come buzzing and bumbling round an ugly old spider's web, too foolish to know that it was a web. And even now how lightly the fly's feet were entangled! A spring, and I should be out of prison.

> "Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
> And the little less, and what worlds away!"

The words came and spoke themselves in my ears, as if they were determined to make me cry.

I was desperately frightened and homesick — homesick even for Lady Turnour. I should have felt like kissing the hem of her dress if I could only have seen her now — and I was n't able to smile when I thought what a rage she 'd be in if I did it. She would have me

sent off to an insane asylum: but even that would be much gayer and more homelike than an underground cellar in the Ghost City of Les Baux.

Dear old Sir Samuel, with his nice red face! I almost loved him. The car seemed like a long-lost aunt. And as for the chauffeur, my brother — I found that I dared not think of him. As in my imagination I saw his eyes, his good dark eyes, clear as a brook, and the lines his brown face took when he thought intently, the tears began running down my cheeks.

"Oh, Jack — Jack, come and help me!" I called.

That comes of *thinking* people's Christian names. They will pop out of your mouth when you least expect it. But it mattered little enough now, except that the sound of the name and the echo of it fluttering back to me made my tears feel boiling hot — hotter than the punch which the Turnours must have finished by this time.

"Jack! Jack!" I called again.

Then I heard a stone rattle up above, somewhere, and a sick horror rushed over me, because of the gipsy men coming back with their wicked old mother.

It was only a very dark gray in the cellar, to my unaccustomed eyes, but suddenly it turned black, with purple edges. I knew then I was going to faint, because I 've done it once or twice before, and things always began by being black with purple edges.

CHAPTER XV

FOR heaven's sake, wake up — tell me you 're not hurt!" a familiar voice was saying in my ear, or I was dreaming it. And because it was such a good dream I was afraid to break it by waking to some horror, so I kept my eyes shut, hoping and hoping for it to come again.

In an instant, it did come. "Child — little girl — wake up! Can't you speak to me?"

His hand, holding mine, was warm and extraordinarily comforting. Suddenly I felt so happy and so perfectly safe that I was paid for everything. My head was on somebody's arm, and I knew very well now who the somebody was. He was real, and not a dream. I sighed cozily and opened my eyes. His face was quite close to mine.

"Thank God!" he said. "Are you all right?"

"Now you 're here," I answered. "I thought they were coming to kill me."

"Who?" he asked, quite fiercely.

"An old gipsy woman and her sons."

"Those people!" he exclaimed. "Why, it was they who told me you were in this place. If it had n't been for them I should n't have found you so soon — though I *would* have found you. The wretches! What made you think ——"

"The old woman was in the room above," I said, "waiting for her sons; and she begged me to look down here for a rosary she dropped. She must have known the bottom steps were gone. She *wanted* me to fall; and though I called, she did n't answer, because she 'd probably hobbled off to find her sons and bring them back to rob me. I have n't hurt myself much, but when I found I could n't climb up I was so frightened! I thought no one would ever come — except those horrible gipsies. And when I heard a sound above I was sure they were here. I felt sick and strange, and I suppose I must have fainted."

"I heard you call, just as I got into the upper room. Then, though I answered, everything was still. Jove! I had some bad minutes! But you 're sure you 're all right now?"

"Sure," I answered, sitting up. "Did I call you 'Jack'? If I did, it was only because one can't shriek 'Mister,' and anyway you told me to."

"Now I *know* you 're all right, or you would n't bother about conventionalities. I wish I had some brandy for you ——"

"I would n't take it if you had."

"That sounds like you. That 's encouraging! Are you strong enough to let me get you up into the light and air?"

"Quite!" I replied briskly, letting him help me to my feet. "But how are we to get up?"

"I 'll show you. It will be easy."

"Let 's look first for the wicked old creature's rosary. If it is n't here, it 's certain she 's a fraud."

"I should think it 's certain without looking. I 'd like to put the old serpent in prison."

"I would n't care to trouble, now I 'm safe. And anyway, how could we prove she meant her sons to rob me, since they had n't begun the act, and so could n't be caught in it?"

"She did n't know you had a man to look after you. When the guide and I came this way, searching, we met a gipsy woman with two awful brutes, and asked if they 'd seen a young lady in a gray coat. They were all three on their way here, as you thought; but when they saw us close to this house, of course, they dared not carry out their plan, and the old woman made the best of a bad business. No doubt they 're as far off by this time as they could get. It might be difficult to prove anything, but I 'd like to try."

"*I* would n't," I said. "But let 's look for that rosary. Have you any matches?"

"Plenty." He took out a match-case, and held a wax vesta for me to peer about in the neighbourhood of the broken stairway.

"Here 's something glittering!" I exclaimed, just as I had been about to give up the search in vain. "She said there was a silver crucifix."

I slipped my fingers into a crack where the rock had been split in breaking off the lower steps. A small, bright thing was there, almost buried in débris, but I could not get my fingers in deep enough to dislodge it. Impatiently I pulled out a hat-pin, and worked until I had unearthed — not the rosary, but a silver coin.

"Somebody else has been down here, dropping money," I said, handing the piece up for Mr. Dane to examine.

"Then it was a long time ago," he replied, "for the coin has the head of Louis XIII. on it."

"Oh, then she was right!" I cried. "I *can* find lost treasure. I'm going to look for more. I believe that piece must have fallen out of a hole I've found here, which goes back ever so far into the rock. I can get my arm in nearly to the elbow."

"*Who* was 'right'?" my brother wanted to know.

"The gipsy. She told my fortune. That was why I did n't refuse to look for her rosary."

"I should have thought a child would have known better," he remarked, scornfully; and his tone hurt my sensitiveness the more because his voice had been so anxious and his words so kind when I was fainting. He had called me "child" and "little girl." I remembered well, and the words had been saying themselves over in my mind ever since. I rather thought that they betrayed a secret — that perhaps he had been getting to care for me a little. That idea pleased me, because he had been abrupt sometimes, and I had n't known what to make of him. Every girl owes it to herself to understand a man thoroughly — at least, as much of his character and feelings as may concern her. Besides, it is not soothing to one's vanity to try — well, yes, I may as well confess that! — to *try* and please a man, yet to know you 've failed after days of association so constant and intimate that hours are equal to the same number of months in an ordinary acquaintance. Now, after thinking I 'd made the discovery that he

really had found me attractive, it was a shock to be spoken to in this way.

"Oh, you *are* cross!" I exclaimed, still poking about in the hole under the stairway.

"I 'm not cross," he said, "but if I were, you 'd deserve it, because you know you 've been foolish. And if you don't know, you ought to, so that you may be wiser next time. The idea of a sensible young woman chumming up in a lonely cave, with a dirty old gipsy certain to be a thief, if not worse, letting her tell fortunes, and then falling into a trap like this. I would n't have believed it of you!"

"I think you 're perfectly horrid," said I. "I wish you had let the guide find me. He would have done it just as well, and been much more polite."

"Doubtless he would have been more polite, but he is n't as young, and might have had trouble in getting you out. There! that 's my last match, and you mustn't waste any more time looking for treasure which you won't find."

"Which I *have* found!" I announced. "I 've got something more — away at the back of the hole. Not that you deserve to see it!"

However, I held up my hand in its torn, bloodstained glove, with two silver pieces displayed on the palm.

"A child's hidey-hole, I suppose," he said without showing as much interest as the occasion warranted. "Otherwise there would be something more valuable. A young servant of the Grimaldis, perhaps; these coins are all of the same period — of no great value as antiques, I 'm afraid."

"They 're of value to me," I retorted. "They 'll bring me luck." I would of course have given him one, if he had n't been so disagreeable; but now I felt that he should n't have anything of mine if he were starving.

"You are very superstitious, among other childlike qualities," he replied, laughing. So *that* was what he thought of me, and *that* was why he had called me "child"! It was all spoiled now, from the beginning; and the guide might as well have found me, as I had said, without *quite* meaning it at the time.

"If you don't like lucky things, you can throw away my St. Christopher," I said, coldly. "You must have thought it very silly."

"I thought it extremely kind of you to give it, and I 've no intention of throwing it away, or parting with it," said he. "Now, are you ready?"

"Yes," I snapped.

In an instant he had me by the waist between two hands which felt strong as steel buckles, and swung me up like a feather on to the first step of the broken stairs. Then, in another second, he was at my side, supporting me to the top without a word, except a muttered "Don't be childish!" when I would have pushed away his arm.

Strange to say, I forgot Lady Turnour and Sir Samuel until we saw the guide, to whom long ago Mr. Dane had called up a reassuring *"Tout va bien!"* Then, suddenly, the awful truth sprang into my mind. All this time they had been waiting for me! What would they say? What would they do?

In my horror, I even forgot my righteous anger with the chauffeur. "Oh!" I gasped. *"The Turnours!"*

Then Mr. Dane spoke kindly again. "Don't worry," he said. "It 's all right. They 've gone on."

"In the car?" I cried.

"No. Sir Samuel can't drive the car. And as Lady Turnour thought she had a chill, rather than wait for me to find you they took a carriage which was here, and drove down to St. Remy. They 'll go on by rail to Avignon, and ——"

"There must have been a dreadful row!" I groaned.

"Not at all. You 're not to worry. Lady Turnour behaved like a cad, as usual, but what can you expect? Sir Samuel did the best he could. He would have liked to wait, but if he 'd insisted she would have had hysterics."

"How came there to be a carriage here?" I asked the guide.

"The gentleman paid three young men who had driven up in it a good sum to get it for himself," he explained, "and they are walking down. They are of Germany."

"Was it a long time?" I went on. "Oh, it *must* have been. It 's nearly dark now, except for the moonlight."

"It is perhaps an hour altogether since mademoiselle separated herself from the others," the guide admitted. "But they have been gone for more than half that time. They did not delay long, after the little dispute with monsieur about the car."

"Oh, there was a dispute!" I caught him up, wheeling upon the chauffeur. "You *must* tell me."

"It was nothing much," he said, still very kindly, "and it was her ladyship's fault, of course. If you were plain and elderly she 'd have more patience; but as it is, you 've seen how quick she is to scold; so, of course, she

was angry when she 'd finished her grog and you did n't turn up."

"What did she say," I asked.

He laughed. "She was quite irrelevant."

"I must know!"

"Well, she seemed to lay most of the blame on the colour of your hair and eyelashes."

"She said ——"

"What could be expected of a girl that dyed her hair yellow and her eyelashes black?"

"*Horrid* woman! You don't believe I do, do you?"

"I must say it had n't occurred to me to think of it."

Then I remembered how angry I was with him, and did n't pursue that subject, but turned again to the other. However, I made a mental note that there was one more thing to punish him for when I got the chance.

"What else did she say?"

"She began to turn purple when Sir Samuel would have defended you, and said she would n't stand your taking such liberties. That it was monstrous, and a few other things, to be kept freezing on mountains by one's domestics, and that she should be ill if she waited. Sir Samuel persuaded her to give you fifteen minutes' grace, but after that she was determined to start. Of course, she did n't know that an accident had happened. She thought you were simply dawdling, and wanted Sir Samuel to arrange for you to drive down with the newly arrived German tourists. Sir Samuel and I objected to this, and later it was settled for the Turnours to do what her ladyship planned for you, without the company of the tourists. Lady Turnour resents *lèse-majesté*."

"It 's a miracle she consented to leave the car," I said.

"She could n't use it without a chauffeur, and naturally I refused to go without knowing what had happened to you."

"You refused!" I stammered.

"Of course. That was where the row came in. We had a few words, and eventually I was deputed to look you up."

"Deputed!" I echoed, desperately. "They never 'deputed' you to do it, I 'm sure."

"They jolly well could n't help themselves. You can't make a man drive a car if he won't. So they went off in the Germans' carriage, and the Germans were enchanted."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, so miserable now that anger leaked out of my heart like water through a sieve. "It 's all my fault. Did they discharge you?"

"I did n't give them the chance. After a few little things her ladyship said, I felt rather hot in the collar, and discharged myself. That is, I gave them notice that I would go as soon as they could get another chauffeur. It would have been bad form to leave them in the lurch, without anyone, on tour."

The tears came to my eyes, and I was thinking so little about myself that I let them roll down without bothering to wipe them away. "Do, do forgive me," I implored. "But you never can, of course. All through my foolishness you 're out of an engagement. And you depended upon it, I know, from what you said."

"There 's nothing to forgive, my dear little sister,"

he said. "It 's you who must forgive me, if I 've distressed you by telling the story in a clumsy way. It was n't your fault. I could n't stand that bounderess's cruel tongue, so I have myself to blame, if anyone. And it 's sure to turn out right in the end."

"You refused to drive their car because you would stay behind and find me ——"

"Any decent chap would do that — even a chauffeur." He spoke lightly to comfort me. "Besides, I wanted to stop. You 're the only sister I ever had."

"You must hate me," I moaned.

"I don't. Please don't cry. I shall faint if you do."

I was obliged to laugh a little through my tears.

"Come," he said, gently. "Let me take you down. Just a word with the guide about those gipsies, and ——"

"Oh, leave the wretched gipsies alone!" I begged. "Who cares, now? If you say anything, they may call us as witnesses at St. Remy or some town where we don't want to stop. Let them go."

"I suppose we might as well," he said, "for we can't prove anything worth proving. Come, then." He slipped some money into the guide's hand, and thanked him for his courtesy and kindness. But another pang shot through my remorseful heart. More money spent by this man for me, when he had so little, and had lost the engagement which, though unworthy his rank in life, was the only present means he had of earning a livelihood. I came, obeying in forlorn silence, and could not answer when he tried to cheer me up as we walked down to the Hotel Monte Carlo. There stood the Aigle in charge of a youth from the inn, and there was

more money to be paid to him. I wanted to give it, but saw that if I insisted Mr. Dane would be vexed.

He suggested putting me inside, as the air was now very cold, with the chill that falls after sunset; but I refused. "I want to sit by you!" I implored, and he said no more. With the glass cage behind us empty, and the great acetylene lamps alight, the Aigle turned and flew down the hill.

CHAPTER XVI

FOR some time we did not speak, but my thoughts moved more quickly than the beating of the engine. At last I said meekly, "Of course, I may as well consider myself discharged, too. And even if I were n't, I should go."

"I 've been thinking about that," Mr. Dane answered. "It was the first thought that came into my head when the row began. It is n't likely she 'll want you to leave, because she won't like getting on without a maid. I think, in the circumstances, unless she is brutal, you 'd better stay with her till your friends can receive you. Someone *must* come forward and help you now."

"I would n't ask anyone but Pamela, who 's gone to America," I protested. "Besides, I can't stand Lady Turnour after what 's happened — with you gone."

(As I said this, I remembered again how I had dreaded to associate with the chauffeur, and planned to avoid him. It was rather funny, as it had turned out; but somehow I did n't feel like laughing.)

"Of course *you* won't mind," I went on. "It 's different for a man. If you were left and I going, it would n't matter, because you 'd have the car. But I 've nothing — except Lady Turnour's 'transformation.' Luckily, she won't want me to stop."

"I think she will," he said, "because your only fault

was in having an accident. You were n't impudent, as she thinks I was in refusing to drive the car. Also in letting her see that I thought her willingness to leave a young girl in a place like this, alone for hours (she did propose to let me drive back for you) was the most brutal thing I 'd ever heard of."

"Oh, how good you were, to sacrifice yourself like that for me!" I exclaimed.

"It was n't entirely for you," he said. "One owes some things to oneself. But when we get to Avignon, and it 's settled between you and Lady Turnour, promise to let me know what you mean to do and give me a chance to advise you."

I promised. But I was so melancholy as to the future and so ashamed of myself for the trouble brought upon my only friend, that his efforts to cheer me were hopeless as an attempt to let off wet fireworks. Mine were soaked; and instead of admiring the moonlight, which soon flooded the wild landscape, it made me the more dismal.

The drive by day had seemed short, but now it was long, for I was in haste to begin the expected battle.

"Courage! and be wise," said Mr. Dane, as he helped me out of the car in front of the Hotel de l'Europe. "I shall bring up your dinner again — it 's no use saying you don't want anything — and we 'll exchange news."

When lions have to be faced, my theory is that the best thing is to open the cage door and walk in boldly, not crawl in on your knees, saying: "Please don't eat me."

I expected Lady Turnour to have a fine appetite for any martyrs lying about loose, but to my surprise a faint

"Come in!" answered my dauntless knock, and I beheld her prostrate in bed.

She said that I had nearly killed her, and that she would probably not be able to move for a week; but the story of my adventures with the gipsy interested her somewhat, and she brightened when she heard of the old coins found in a hole in the rock. There was not a word about sending me away, and I suspected that a scene with Sir Samuel had crushed the lady. Even a worm will turn, and Sir Samuel may be one of those mild men who, when once roused, are capable of surprising those who know them best. Quite meekly she desired that I would show her the coins, and having seen them, she said that she would buy them of me. Not that they were of any intrinsic value, but they might be "lucky," and she would give me a sovereign for the three.

Then an idea came and whispered in my ear. I thanked Lady Turnour politely, but said I thought I had better keep the coins and show them to an antiquary. They might be more valuable than we supposed, and I should need all the money, as well as all the luck possible, now that I was leaving her ladyship's service.

"Leaving!" she echoed. "But as you had an accident I 've made up my mind to excuse you this time, and not discharge you as I intended. You don't know your business too well, but any maid is better than no maid on a tour like this, as Sir Samuel pointed out to me."

"But, begging your ladyship's pardon," I ventured, "I understand that the chauffeur is to go because he stopped at Les Baux to look for me. As he very likely

saved my life, I could n't be so ungrateful as to stay on in my situation when he is losing his for my sake."

"What nonsense!" snapped her ladyship. "As if that had anything to do with you, and if it has, it *ought n't.* Besides, if he will apologize, he can stop. Sir Samuel says so."

"He does n't seem to think he was in the wrong, my lady," said I. "As your ladyship will probably be at Avignon some time before finding another chauffeur, it will be easy to look for a maid at the same time."

"Be here some time!" she cried. "I won't! We want to get on to a château where my stepson 's visiting."

"I should be delighted to offer your ladyship two of the lucky coins for nothing," said I, my impertinence wrapped in honey, "if she would persuade Sir Samuel to *ask* the chauffeur to stay."

"Why, that 's just what Sir Samuel wants to do, if I would hear of it!" The words popped out before she had stopped to think.

"It might be too late after this evening," I suggested. "The chauffeur will perhaps take steps at once to secure some other engagement; and I fear that a good man is always in great demand. I hope that your ladyship will kindly understand that it would be nothing to *me*, if he had n't got into trouble for my sake."

"You can leave the coins, and call Sir Samuel, who is in his room next door," remarked Lady Turnour with dignity. "I will talk with him."

The greedy creature was delighted to have the coins without paying for them, and delighted with the excuse to do what she would have liked to do without an excuse,

if obstinacy had not forbidden. I kept one coin for my own luck; I called Sir Samuel, who was sulking in his den, was dismissed with an order for her ladyship's dinner, which she would have in bed, and told to return with the menu.

A few minutes later, coming back, I met Mr. Jack Dane in the corridor.

"Have you seen Sir Samuel yet?" I inquired.

"No. He 's sent for me, and I 'm on my way to him now."

"He 's going to ask you to stay," I said.

"I think you 're mistaken there," replied the chauffeur. "The old boy himself has a strong sense of justice, and would like to make everything all right, no doubt, but his wife would give him no peace if he did."

"If he does, though, what shall you do?" I inquired anxiously.

Mr. Dane looked into space. "I think I 'd better go in any case."

"Why?"

If he 'd been a woman, I think he would have answered "Because," but being a man he reflected a few seconds, and said he thought it would be better for him in the end.

"Do you want to go?" I asked, drearily.

"No. But I ought to want to."

"Please stay," I begged. "Please — brother."

"Sir Samuel may n't ask me; and you would n't have me crawl to him?"

"But if he does ask you."

"I 'll stay," he said.

Impulsively, I held out my hand. He took it, and pressed it so hard that it hurt, then dropped it suddenly. His manner is certainly very odd sometimes. I suppose he does n't want me to flatter myself that I am of any importance in his scheme of existence. But he need n't worry. He has shown me very plainly that he is one of those typical, unsusceptible Englishmen French writers put in their books, men with hearts whose every compartment is warranted love-tight.

CHAPTER XVII

LADY TURNOUR opened her heart and her wardrobe and gave me a blouse the first thing in the morning, which act of generosity was the more remarkable as morning is not her best time. I have found that it is the early maid who catches the first snub, which otherwise might fall innocuously upon a husband. The blouse was one which I had heard her ladyship say she hated; but then her idea of true charity, combined, as it should be, with economy, is always to give to the poor what you would n't be found dead in yourself, because it is more blessed to give than to receive badly made things. On the same principle I immediately passed the gift on to a chambermaid of the hotel, who perhaps in her turn dropped it a grade lower in the social scale, and so it may go on forever, blouse without end; but all that is apart from the point. The important part of the transaction was the token that the dead past was to bury its dead; and possibly Sir Samuel timidly offered a waistcoat or a pair of boots to the chauffeur.

Instead of lying in bed, as Lady Turnour had threatened to do for a week, she was up earlier than usual, as well as ever she had been, and not more than half as disagreeable. Although the sky looked as if it might burst into tears at any moment, and although Orange has nothing but historic remains and historic

records to show, she was ready to start, almost cheerfully, at ten o'clock.

I was allowed to be of the party, laden with mackintoshes for my master and mistress; and I did n't admire the triumphal arch at Orange nearly as much as I had admired the smaller and older one at St. Remy. But Lady Turnour admired it far more, and was so nice to Sir Samuel that he thought it *the* arch of the world. They put their heads together over the same volume of Baedeker, which was an exquisite pleasure to the poor man, and he was so pathetic I could have cried into his footsteps, as he read (pronouncing almost everything wrong) about the building of the Arch of Tiberius. "Why, that 's just like a sweet little statuette I used to have standing on a table in my drawing-room window!" exclaimed Lady Turnour, looking up at the beautiful Winged Victory. "You might think it was a copy!"

Although the histories say Orange was n't very important in Roman days, it has taken revenge by letting everything not Roman fall into decay, except, of course, its memories of the family through which William the Silent of Holland became William of Orange. The house of the first William of Orange, the hero of song who rode back wounded from Roncesvalles to his waiting wife, is gone now, save for a wall and a buttress or two on a lonely hill of the old town; yet the arch, which was old when his château was begun, still towers dark yellow as tarnished Etruscan gold against the sky; and the Roman theatre is the grandest out of Italy. Lady Turnour could not see why the Comédie Française should produce plays there, even once a year, when they could do

it so much more comfortably at any modern theatre in the provinces if they *must* travel; and as to the gathering of the Felibres, she did n't even know what Felibres were, nor did she care, as she was unlikely to meet any in socicty. She would have proposed going on somewhere else, as there was so "little to see in Orange," but that rain came sweeping down, cold from the east, when I had followed the pair a quarter of a mile from the motor. They fled into their mackintoshes as a hermit-crab flees into his borrowed shell, and I was the only one the worse for wear when we reached the car. I did n't much mind the wetting, but it was rather nice to be fussed over by a brother, and forced into a coat of his, whether I liked or not. "The quality" must have seen me in it, through the glass, but Lady Turnour ignored the sight. Altogether, everything was agreeable, and the thunder-storm of last night, in clearing, had turned us into quite a happy family party.

It rained all day, and I sat in my room before a blazing fire of olive wood which a dear old waiter, exactly like a confidential servant of a pope, bestowed upon me out of sheer Provençal good nature. As he 's been in the hotel for thirty years, he is a privileged person, and can do what he likes.

Lady Turnour gave me a pile of stockings to look over, lest Satan should find some more ornamental use for my idle hands; so I asked Mr. Dane for his socks too; and pretended that I should consider it a slight upon my skill if he refused.

That was our last night at Avignon, and early in the morning I packed for Arles, where we would sleep.

But on the way we stopped at Tarascon, so splendid with its memories of Du Guesclin, and the towers of King René's great château reflected in a water-mirror, that no Tartarin could be blamed if he were born with a boasting spirit. And there are other things in Tarascon for its Tartarins to be proud of, besides the noble old castle where King René used to spend his springs and summers when he was tired of living in state at Aix. There is the church of Saint Martha, and the beautiful Hotel de Ville, and — almost best of all for its quaintness, though far from beautiful — the great Tarasque lurking in a dark and secret lair.

We could n't go into the château, but perhaps it was better to see it only from the outside, and remember it always in a crystal picture, framed with the turquoise of the sky. Besides, not going in gave us more time for Beaucaire, just across the river — Beaucaire of the Fair; Beaucaire of sweet Nicolete and her faithful lover Aucassin.

I know a song about Nicolete of the white feet and hair of yellow gold, and I sang it below my breath, sitting beside my brother Jack, as we crossed the bridge. Although I sang so softly, he heard, and turned to me for an instant. "You *can* sing!" he said.

"You don't like singing," I suggested.

"Only better than most things — that 's all."

"Yet you did n't want me to sing the other night."

"That was because your hair was down. I could n't stand both together."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Don't you? All the better. Never mind trying

to guess. Let 's think about the fair. Would n't you have liked to come here in the days when it was one of the greatest shows in all France?"

"I could n't have come in a motor then."

"You 're getting to be an enthusiast. You 'll have to marry a millionaire with at least a forty-horse-power car."

"I happen to be running away from one now, in a sixty-horse-power car. But I don't want to think of him in this romantic country. The idea of Corn Plasters, near the garden where Nicolete's little feet tripped among the daisies by moonlight, is too appalling."

"Up on the hill are the towers of the castle where Aucassin was in prison for his love of Nicolete," said the chauffeur. "If only I can induce them to go there, and walk in the garden on the battlements! It 's beautiful, full of great perfumed Provençal roses, and quantities of fleur-de-lys growing wild under pine trees and peering out of formal yew hedges. You never saw anything quite like it. Oh, I must manage the thing somehow."

"I think you could, in their present mood," said I. "They 're quite properly honey-moony since the storm, which was a blessing in disguise. They 'll go up, and feel romantic and young; but as for me ——"

"You 'll go up, and *be* the things they can only feel. I should like to go with you there ——" he broke off, looking wistful.

"Oh, do get some one to guard the car, and come," I begged him. "You 've seen it all before?"

"Yes."

"You look as if the place had sentimental memories for you."

He smiled. "There is a sentiment attaching to it. Some day I may tell you ——" he stopped again. "No, I don't think I 'll do that."

Suddenly the thought of the garden was spoiled for me. I imagined that, in happier days, he must have walked there with a girl he loved. Perhaps he loved her still, only misfortune had come to him, and they could not marry. In that case, I 'd been misjudging him, maybe. His bluntnesses and abruptnesses and coldnesses did n't mean that the compartments were "love-tight," as I 'd fancied, but that they were already full to overflowing.

He did induce the Turnours to see the garden on the old battlements, and he did find a suitable watch-dog for the car in order to be my companion. And he was less self-conscious and happier in his manner than he had been since the first day or two of our acquaintance. Also the garden, starred with spring flowers, was even more lovely than I had expected. I ought to have enjoyed every moment there; but — it is never pleasant to be with a man when you think he is wishing that you were another girl.

"Was she pretty?" I could n't resist asking.

For an instant he looked bewildered; then he understood. "Very," he replied, smiling. "About the prettiest girl I ever saw. The description of Nicolete would fit her very well. 'The clear face, delicately fine,' and all that. But I don't let my mind dwell much on girls in these days, when I can help it, as you can well imagine."

"And when you can't help it?" I wanted to know.

"Oh, when I can't help it, I feel like a bear with a sore head, and no honey in my hollow tree."

So that is why he is so disagreeable, sometimes! He is thinking of the girl of the battlemented garden at Beaucaire. I shall try and find out all about her; but I don't know that I shall feel better satisfied when I have.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE garden on the battlements at Beaucaire seemed to bring out all that 's best in Lady Turnour, and she was — for her — quite radiant when we arrived at Arles. Not that it was much credit to her to be radiant, when the road had been perfect, and the car had behaved like an angel, as usual; but small favours from small natures are thankfully received; and just as it is a blight upon the spirits of the whole party when her ladyship frowns, so do we cheer up and hope for better things when she smiles.

As we were to spend the night at Arles, and arrived at the quaint, delightful Hôtel du Forum before lunch, even the working classes (meaning my alleged brother and myself) could afford that pleasant, leisured feeling which is the right of those more highly placed.

The moment we arrived I knew that I was going to fall in love with Arles, and I hurried to get the unpacking done, so that I might be free to make its acquaintance. Lady Turnour, still in her garden mood, told me to do as I liked till time to dress her for dinner, but to mind and have no more accidents, as all her frocks hooked at the back.

I am getting to be quite a skilled lady's-maid now, and am not sure it ought not to be my permanent *métier*,

though I do like to think I was born for better things, and comfort myself by remembering how mother used to say that a lady can always do everything better than a common person if she chooses to try, even menial work, because she puts her intelligence and love for daintiness into all she does. I unpacked my master's and mistress's things with the flashing speed of summer lightning and the neatness of a drill-sergeant. In a twinkling everything was in exactly the right place, and my conscience felt as if it were growing wings as I flew off to my luncheon. The whole afternoon free, and the saints only knew what nice, unexpected adventures might happen! Cousin Catherine used to say, not meaning to be complimentary, that I "attracted adventures as some people seem to attract microbes," and I could almost hear them buzzing round my head as I ran down-stairs.

There, waiting for me as if he were an incarnate adventure, was the chauffeur, who appeared to be quite excited. "You must have a peep into the dining-room," he said. "The door 's open. You can look in without being noticed, and see the walls, which are painted with pictures from Mistral's works. Also there 's something else of interest, but I won't tell you what it is. I want to see if you can discover it for yourself."

I peeped, and found the pictures charming. After following them with my eyes all round the green walls which they decorate effectively, my gaze lit upon a man sitting at one of the small tables. He was with two or three friends who hung upon the words which he accompanied by the most graceful, spirited, yet unconscious gestures. Old he may have been as years go, but the fire

of eternal youth was in his vivid dark eyes, and his smile, which had in it the tenderness of great experience, of long years lived in sympathy and love for mankind. His head was very noble; and its shape, and the way he had of carrying it, would alone have shown that he was Someone.

"Who is that man?" I whispered to Jack Dane. "That one who is so different from all the others."

"Can't you guess?" he asked.

"Not Mistral?"

"Yes. It 's one of his days here. He 'll be in the museum after lunch. I 'll take you there, and if he sees that you 're interested in things, he 'll talk to you."

"Oh, how glorious!" I breathed, quite awed at the prospect. "But if he should find out that we 're only lady's-maid and chauffeur?"

"Do you think it would matter to him *who* we were — a great genius like that? He would n't care if we were beggars, if we had souls and brains and hearts."

"Well, we have got *some* of those things," I said. "Do let 's hurry, and get to the museum before our betters. They can always be counted upon to spend an hour and a half at lunch if there 's a good excuse, such as there 's sure to be in this place, famous for rich Provençal cooking. Whereas Monsieur Mistral looks as if he would grudge more than half an hour on an occupation so prosaic as eating."

"Nothing could be prosaic to him," said Mr. Dane. "And that 's the secret of life, is n't it? I think you have it, too, and I 'm trying to take daily lessons from you.

By the time we part I hope I shan't be quite such a sulky, discontented brute as I am now."

"By the time we part!" The words gave me a queer, horrid little prick, with just that nasty ache that comes when you jab a hatpin into your head instead of into your hat, and have got to pull it out again. I have grown so used to being constantly with him, and having him look after me and order me about in his dictatorial but curiously nice way, that I suppose I shall rather miss him for a week or two when this odd association of ours comes to an end.

It is strange how one ancient town can differ utterly from its neighbour, and what an extraordinary, unforgetable individuality each can have.

The whole effect of Avignon is mediæval. In Arles your mind flies back at once to Rome, and then pushes away from Rome to find Greece. All among the red, pink, and yellow houses, huddled picturesquely together round the great arena, you see Rome in the carved columns and dark piles of brick built into mediæval walls. The glow and colour of the shops and houses seem only to intensify the grimness and grayness of that Roman background, the immense wall of the arena. Greece you see in the eyes of the beautiful, stately women, young and old, in their classic features, and the moulding of their noble figures. (No wonder Epistemon urged his giant to let the beautiful girls of Arles alone!) You feel Greece, too, in the soft charm of the atmosphere, the dreamy blue of the sky, and the sunshine, which is not quite garish golden, not quite pale silver; a special sky and special sunshine, which seem to belong to Arles

alone, enclosing the city in a dream of vanished days. The very gaiety which must have sparkled there for happy Greek youths and maidens gives a strange, fascinating sadness to it now, as if one felt the weight of Roman rule which came and dimmed the sunlight.

It was delightful to walk the streets, to look at the lovely women in their becoming head-dresses, and to stare into the windows of curiosity shops. But there was the danger of committing *lèse-majesté* by running into the arms of the bride and groom at the museum, so "my brother" hurried me along faster than I liked, until the fascination of the museum had enthralled me; then I thanked him, for Mistral was there, for the moment all alone.

Mr. Dane had n't told me that they had met before, but Monsieur Mistral greeted him at once as an acquaintance, smiling one of his illuminating smiles. He even remembered certain treasures of the museum which the chauffeur — in unchauffeur days — had liked best. These were pointed out and their interest explained to me, best of all to my romantic, Latin side being the "Cabelladuro d'Or," the lovely golden hair of the dead Beauty of Les Baux, that enchanted princess whose magic sleep was so rudely broken. We all talked together of the exquisite Venus of Arles, agreeing that it was wicked to have transplanted her to the Louvre; and Mistral's eyes rested upon me with something like interest for a moment as I said that I had seen and loved her there. I felt flattered and happy, forgetting that I was only a servant, who ought scarcely to have dared speak in the presence of this great genius.

"She seems to understand something of the charm of Provence, which makes our country different from any other in the world, does she not?" the poet said at last to my companion. "She would enjoy an August fête at Arles. Some day you ought to bring her."

Mr. Dane did not answer or look at me; and I was thankful for that, because I was being silly enough to blush. It was too easy so see what Monsieur Mistral thought!

"Why did n't you tell me you knew him already?" I asked, when we had reluctantly left the museum (which might be invaded by the Philistines at any minute) and were on our way to the famous Church of St. Trophime. That we meant to see first, saving the theatre for sunset.

"Oh," answered the chauffeur evasively, "I was n't at all sure he 'd remember me. He has so many admirers, and sees so many people."

"I have a sort of idea that your last visit to this part of the world was paid *en prince*, all the same!" I was impertinent enough to say.

He laughed. "Well, it was rather different from this one, anyhow," he admitted. "A little while ago it made me pretty sick to compare the past with the present, but I don't feel like that now."

"Why have you changed?" I asked.

"Partly the influence of your cheerful mind."

"Thank you. And the other part?"

"Another influence, even more powerful."

"I should like to know what it is, so that I might try to come under it, too, if it 's beneficent," that ever-lively curiosity of mine prompted me to say.

"I am inclined to think it is not beneficent," he answered, smiling mysteriously. "Anyhow, I 'm not going to tell you what it is."

"You never do tell me anything about yourself," I exclaimed crossly, "whereas I 've given you my whole history, almost from the day I cut my first tooth, up to that when I — adopted my first brother."

"Or had him thrust upon you," he amended. "You see, you 've nothing to reproach yourself with in your past, so you can talk of it without bitterness. I can't — yet. Only to think of some things makes me feel venomous, and though I really believe I 'm improving in the sunbath of your example, which I have every day, the cure is n't complete yet. Until I am able to talk of a certain person without wanting to sprinkle my conversation with curses, I mean to be silent. But I owe it to you that I don't *want* to curse her any more. A short time ago it gave me actual pleasure."

So it is to a woman he owes his misfortunes! As Alice said in Wonderland, it grows "mysteriouser and mysteriouser." Also it grows more romantic, when one puts two and two together; and I have always been great at that. The "sentimental association" of the battlement garden plus the inspiration to evil language, equal (in my fancy) one fair, faithless lady, once loved, now hated. I hate her, too, whatever she did, and I should like to box her ears. I hope she 's *quite* old, and married, and that she makes up her complexion, and everything else which causes men to tire of their first loves sooner or later. Not that it is anything to me, personally; but one owes a little loyalty to one's friends.

The porch and cloisters of St. Trophime's were too perfectly beautiful to be marred by a mood; but my brother Jack's mysteriously wicked sweetheart would keep coming in between me and the wonderful carvings in the most disturbing way. Some women never know when they are wanted! But I did my best to make Mr. Dane forget her by taking an intelligent interest in everything, especially the things he cared for most, though once, in an absent-minded instant, I did unfortunately say: "I don't admire that type of girl," when we were talking about a sculptured saint; and although he looked surprised I thought it too complicated to try and explain.

The afternoon light was burnishing the ancient stone carvings to copper when we left the cloisters of St. Trophime, took one last look at the porch, and turned toward the amphitheatre. We were right to have waited, for the vast circle was golden in the sunset, like a heavy bracelet, dropped by Atlas one day, when he stretched a weary arm; and the beautiful fragments of coloured marbles, which the Greeks loved and Christians destroyed, were the jewels of that great bracelet. The place was so pathetically beautiful in the dying day that a soft sadness pressed upon me like a hand on my forehead, and echoes of the long-dead past, when Greek Arles was a harbour of commerce by sea and river, or when it was Roman Arelate, rich and cruel, rang in my ears as we wandered through the cells of prisoners, the dens of lions, and the rooms of gladiators, where the young "men about town" used to pat their favourites on oiled backs, or make their bets on ivory tablets.

"If we were here by moonlight, we should see ghosts,"

I said. "Come, let us go before it grows any darker or sadder. The shadows seem to move. I think there 's a lion crouching in that black corner."

"He won't hurt you, sister Una," said my brother Jack. "There 's one thing you must see here before I take you home — back to the hotel, I mean; and that is the Saracen Tower, as they call it."

So we went into the Saracen Tower, and high up on the wall I saw the presentment of a hand.

"That is the Hand of Fatima," explained the guide, who had been following rather than conducting us, because the chauffeur knew almost as much about the amphitheatre as he did. "You should touch it, mademoiselle, for luck. All the young ladies like to do that here; and the young men also, for that matter."

Instantly my brother lifted me up, so that I might touch the hand; and then I would not be content unless he touched it too.

I had dinner in the couriers' room that evening, with my brother, when I had dressed Lady Turnour for hers. We were rather late, and had the room to ourselves, for the crowd which had collected there at luncheon time had vanished by train or motor. There was a nice old waiter, who was frankly interested in us, recognizing perhaps that, as a maid and chauffeur, we were out of the beaten track. He wanted to know if we had done any sight-seeing in Arles, and seemed to take it as a personal compliment that we had.

"Mademoiselle touched the Hand of Fatima, of course?" he asked, letting a trickle of sauce spill out of a sauce-boat in his friendly eagerness for my answer.

"Oh, yes, I saw to it that she did that," replied Mr. Dane, with conscious virtue in the achievement.

"It is for luck, is n't it?" I said, to make conversation.

"And more especially for love," came the unexpected answer.

"For love!" I exclaimed.

"But yes," chuckled the old man. "If a young girl puts her hand on the Hand of Fatima at Arles, that hand puts love into hers. Her fate is sealed within the month, so it is said."

"Nonsense!" remarked Mr. Dane, "I never heard that silly story before." And he went on eating his dinner with extraordinary nonchalance and an unusual, almost abnormal, appetite.

CHAPTER XIX

I SHALL always feel that I dreamed Aigues Mortes: that I fell asleep at night — oh, but fell very far, so much farther than one usually falls even when one wakes with the sensation of dropping from a great height, that I went bumping down, down from century to century, until I touched earth in a strange, drear land, to find I had gone back in time about seven hundred years.

Not that there is a conspicuous amount either of land or earth at Aigues Mortes, City of Dead Waters — if the place really does exist, which I begin to doubt already; but I have only to shut my eyes to call it up; and in my memory I shall often use it as a background for some mediæval picture painted with my mind. For with my mind I can rival Raphael. It is only when I try to execute my fancies that I fail, and then they "all come different," which is heart breaking. But it will be something to have the background always ready.

The dream did not begin while we spun gaily from Arles to Aigues Mortes, through pleasant if sometimes puerile-seeming country (puerile only because we had n't its history dropping from our fingers' ends); but there was time, between coming in sight of the huge, gray-brown towers and driving in through the fortified gateway, for me to take that great leap from the present far down into the past.

To my own surprise, I did n't want to think of the motor-car. It had brought us to older places, but within this walled quadrangle it was as if we had come full tilt into a picture; and the automobile was not an artistic touch. Ingrate that I was, I turned my back upon the Aigle, and was thankful when Sir Samuel and Lady Turnour walked out of my sight around the corner of the picture. I pretended, when they had disappeared, that I had painted them out, and that they would cease to exist unless I relented and painted them in again, as eventually I should have to do. But I had no wish to paint the driver of the car out of my picture, for in spite of his chauffeur's dress he is of a type which suits any century, any country — that clear-cut, slightly stern, aquiline type which you find alike on Roman coins and in modern drawing-rooms. He would have done very well for one of St. Louis's crusaders, waiting here at Aigues Mortes to sail for Palestine with his king, from the sole harbour the monarch could claim as his on all the Mediterranean coast. I decided to let him remain in the dream picture, therefore, and told him so, which seemed to please him, for his eyes lighted up. He always understands exactly what I mean when I say odd things. I should never have felt *quite* the same to him again, I think, if he had stared and asked "What dream picture?"

I had been brought on this expedition strictly for use, not for ornament. We were going from Aigues Mortes to St. Gilles and from St. Gilles to Nîmes, therefore Arles was already a landmark in our past. I could walk about and amuse myself if I liked, but I must be at the inn before the return of my master and mistress to arrange

a light repast collected at Arles, as we should have to lunch later at Nîmes, and the resources of Aigues Mortes were not supposed to be worthy of millionaires in search of the picturesque. There were several neat packages, the contents of which would aid and abet such humble refreshment as the City of Dead Waters could produce; but I had more than an hour to play with; and much can be done in an hour by an enthusiast with a good circulation.

I had not quite realized, however, how largely my brother's companionship contributed to my pleasure on these excursions. We had seen almost everything together, and suddenly it occurred to me that I was taking his presence too much for granted. He would not go with me now, because in so small a round we were certain to run up against the Turnours, and her ladyship might be pleased to give me another lecture like that of evil memory at Avignon. I would have risked future punishment for the sake of present pleasure, and it was on my tongue to say so; but I swallowed the words with difficulty, like an over-large pill.

So it fell out that I wandered off alone, sustaining myself on high thoughts of Crusaders as I gazed up at the statue of St. Louis, and paced the sentinels' pathway round the gigantic ramparts, unchanged since Boccanegra built them. Looking down from the ramparts the town, enclosed in the fortress walls, was like a faded chessboard cast ashore from the wreck of some ancient ship; and round the dark walls and towers waves of yellow sand and wastes of dead blue waters stretched as far as my gaze could reach, toward the tideless sea.

Louis bought this tangled desert of sand and water in the middle of the thirteenth century from an Abbot of Psalmodi, so the guide told me, and I liked the name of that abbot so much that I kept saying it over and over, to myself. Abbot of Psalmodi! It was to the ear what an old, illuminated missal is to the eye, rich with crimson lake, and gold, and ultramarine. It was as if I heard an echo from King Arthur's day, that dim, mysterious day when history was flushed with dawn; the Abbot of Psalmodi!

The heart of Aigues Mortes for me was the great tower of Constance, but a very wicked heart, full of clever and murderous devices, which was at its wickedest, not in the dark ages, but in the glittering times of Louis XIV. and of other Louis after him. That tower is the bad part of the dream where horrors accumulate and you struggle to cry out, while a spell holds you silent. In the days when Aigues Mortes was not a dream, but a terrible reality to the prisoners of that cruel tower, how many anguished cries must have broken the spell; cries from hideous little dungeons like rat-holes, cries from the far heights of the tower where women and children starved and were forgotten!

I was almost glad to get away; yet now that I am away I shall often go back — in my dream.

Alexander Dumas the elder went from Aigues Mortes to St. Gilles, driving along the Beaucaire Canal, on that famous tour of his which took him also to Les Baux; and we too went from Aigues Mortes to St. Gilles, though I 'm sure the Turnours had no idea that it was a pilgrimage in famous footprints. Only the humble maid and

chauffeur had the joy of knowing that. We had both read Dumas' account of his journey, and we laughed over the story of the little saint he stole at Les Baux.

It was a pleasant run to St. Gilles, though there was a shrewish nip in the wind which made me hope that Lady Turnour's mind was not running ahead to the mountains and gorges in front of her, not far away by days or miles now. I wanted her to get tangled up in them before she had time to think of the cold, and then it would be too late to turn tail.

I had just begun to call the little town of St. Gilles an "ugly hole," and wonder what St. Louis saw to love in it, when, coming out of a squalid, hilly street through which I had tried to pick my way on foot, alone, suddenly the façade of the wonderful old church burst upon my sight, a vision of beauty.

No self-respecting motor-car would have condescended to trust itself in such a street, and as a rabble of small male St. Gillesites swarmed round the Aigle when she stopped at the beginning of the ascent, Mr. Dane had to play guardian angel. "I 've been here before," he said, as usual, for this whole tour seems to be a twice-told tale for him. A few days ago I should have pitied him aloud for not being able to blow the dust off his old impressions; but now, when he speaks of past experiences, I think: "Oh, I wonder if this is another place associated in his mind with that *horrid* woman?" For on mature deliberation I have definitely niched her among the Horrors in my mental museum. In front of me walked Sir Samuel and Lady Turnour, whose very backs cried out their loathing of St. Gilles; but abruptly the expression of

their shoulders changed; they had seen the façade, and even they could not help feeling vaguely that it must be unique in the world, that of its kind nothing could be more beautiful.

That was before I saw it, for a respectful distance must be maintained between Those Who Pay and Those Who Work; but I guessed from the backs that something extraordinary was about to be revealed. Then it was revealed, and I would have given a good deal to have some one to whom I could exclaim "Is n't it glorious!"

Still, I am luckily very good chums with myself, and it is never too much trouble to think out new adjectives for my own benefit, or to indicate quaint points of view. I was soon making the best of my own society in the way of intelligent companionship, shaking crumbs of half-forgotten history out of my memory, and finding a dried currant of fact here and there. In convent days there was hardly a saint or saintess with whom I had n't a bowing acquaintance, and although a good many have cut me since, I can generally recall something about them, if necessary, as title worshippers can about the aristocracy. I thought hard for a minute, and suddenly up rolled a curtain in my mind, and there in his niche stood St. Gilles. He was born in Athens, and was a most highly connected saint, with the blood of Greek kings in his veins, all of which was eventually spilled like water in the name of religion. It seemed very suitable that such perfection of carving and proportion as was shown in steps, towers, façade, and frieze should be dedicated to a Greek saint, who must have adored and understood true beauty as few of his brother saints could.

Mr. Dane had said, just before I started, that there was a gem of a spiral staircase, called the Vis de St. Gilles, which I ought to see, and a house, unspoiled since mediæval days; but the question of these sights was settled adversely for me by my master and mistress. The frieze they did admire, but it sufficed. Their inner man and woman clamoured for a feast, and the eyes must be sacrificed.

As for me, I did not count even as a sacrifice, of course, but I followed them back to the car as I 'd followed them from it, and the car flew toward Nîmes.

Just at first, for a few moments which I hate to confess to myself now, I was disappointed in Nîmes. The town looked cold, and modern, and conceited after the melancholy charm of Arles and the mediæval aspect of Avignon; but that was only as we drove to our stately hotel in its large, dignified square. Afterward — after the inevitable lunching and unpacking — when I started out once again in the society of my adopted relative, I prayed to be forgiven.

A gale was blowing, but little cared we. A toque or a picture-hat make all the difference in the world to a woman's impressions, even of Paradise — if the wind be ever more than a lovely zephyr there. Lady Turnour had insisted on changing her motoring hat for a Gainsborough confection which would, I was deadly certain, cause her to loathe Nîmes while memory should last; but the better part was mine. Toqued and veiled, the mistral could crack its cheeks if it liked; it could n't hurt mine, or do unseemly things to my hair.

In the gardens of Louis XIV. I gave myself to Nîmes

as devotee forever; and as the glories of the past slowly dawned upon me, that Past round which the King had planted his flowers and formal trees, and placed vases and statues, I wished I were a worthier worshipper at the shrine.

I think that there can be no more beautiful town in the world than Nîmes in springtime. The wind brought fairy perfumes, and lovely little green and golden puff-balls fell from the budding trees at our feet, as if they wanted to surprise us. The fish in the crystal clear water of the old Roman baths, which King Louis tried to spoil but could n't, swam back and forth in a golden net of sunshine. We two children of the twentieth century amused ourselves in attempting to reconstruct the baths as they must have looked in the first century; and the glimmering columns under the green water, now lost to the eye, now seen again, white and elusive as mermaids playing hide and seek, helped our imagination.

Far easier was it to go back to Rome in the Temple of Diana, so beautiful in ruin and so little changed except by time, as to bring to the heart a pang of mingled joy and pain, of sadness which women love and men resent — unless they are poets. Doves were cooing softly there, the only oracles of the temple in these days; and what they said to each other and to us seemed more mysterious than the sayings of common doves, because their ancestors had no doubt handed down much wisdom to them, from generation to generation, ever since Diana was taken seriously as a goddess, or perhaps even since the dim days when Celtic gods were reigning powers.

From the gardens we went slowly to that other temple

which unthinking people and guide-books have named the Maison Carrée, the most lovely temple out of Greece, and the one which has suffered most from sheer, uncompromising stupidity in modern days. Now it rests from persecution, though it shows its scars; and I wondered dully, as I stood gazing at the Corinthian columns — strong, yet graceful — how so dull a copy as the Madeleine could possibly have been evolved from such perfection.

Inside in the museum was the dearest old gentleman in a tall hat, who explained to us with ingenuous pride and dignity the splendid collection of coins which he himself had given to the town. It was easy to see that they were the immediate jewels of his soul; there was not one piece which he did not know and love as if it had been his child, though there were so many thousands that he alone could keep strict count of them. He insisted gravely upon the superlative value of the least significant in appearance, but he could joke a little about other things than coins. There was an old mosaic which we admired, with a faded God of Love riding a winged steed.

"*L'Amour s'en va,*" he chuckled, pointing to the half-obliterated figure. "*N'est pas?*" and he turned to me for confirmation. "I don't know yet," I answered.

"Mademoiselle is very fortunate — but very young," said the dear old gentleman, looking like a late eighteenth-century portrait as he smiled under his high hat. "And what thinks monsieur?"

"That it is better not to give him a chance to fly away, by keeping the door shut against him in the beginning," replied Mr. Dane, as coldly as if he kept his heart on ice.

Sunset was fading, like Love on the mosaic, when we

came to the amphitheatre; but the sky was still stained red, and each great arch of stone framed a separate ruby. It was a strange effect, almost sinister in its splendour, and all the air was rose-coloured.

"Is it a good omen or an evil one for our future?" I asked.

"Means storms, I think," the chauffeur answered in the laconic way he affects sometimes, but there was an odd smile in his eyes, almost like defiance — of me, or of Fate. I did n't know which, but I should have liked to know.

CHAPTER XX

THE wind sang me to sleep that night in Nîmes — sang in my dreams, and sang me awake when morning turned a white searchlight on my eyelids.

I was glad to see sunshine, for this was the day of our flight into the north, and if the sky frowned on the enterprise Lady Turnour might frown too, in spite of Bertie and his château.

It was cold, and I trembled lest the word "snow" should be dropped by the bridegroom into the ear of the bride; but nothing was said of the weather or of any change in the programme, while I and paint and powder and copper tresses were doing what Nature had refused to do for her ladyship.

"Cold morning, madame!" remarked the porter, who came to bring more wood for the sitting-room fire before breakfast. He was a polite and pleasant man, but I could have boxed his ears. "Madame departs to-day in her automobile? Is it to go south or north? Because in the north ——"

With great presence of mind I dropped a pile of maps and guide-books.

"What a clumsy creature you are!" exclaimed her ladyship, playing into my hands. "I could n't understand the last part of what he said."

Luckily by this time the man was gone; and my memory of his words was extraordinarily vague. But a dozen things contrived to keep me in suspense. Every one who came near Lady Turnour had something to say about the weather. Then, for the first time, it occurred to the Aigle to play a trick upon us. Just as the luggage was piled in, after numerous little delays, she cast a shoe; in other words, burst a tyre, apparently without any reason except a mischievous desire to be aggravating. Another half hour wasted! And fat, silvery clouds were poking up their great white heads over the horizon in the north, where, perhaps, they were shaking out powder.

The next thing that happened was a snap and a tinkle in our inner workings, rather like the sound you might expect if a giantess dropped a hairpin. "Chain broken!" grumbled the chauffeur, as he stopped the car on the level of a long, straight road, and jumped nimbly down. "We ought n't to have boasted yesterday."

"Who 's superstitious now?" I taunted him, as he searched the tool-box in the same way a child ransacks a Christmas stocking.

"Oh, about motor-cars! That 's a different thing," said he calmly. "Cold, is n't it? My fingers are so stiff they feel as if they were all thumbs."

"Et tu, Brute," I wailed. "For *goodness'* sake, don't let *her* hear you. She 's capable even now of turning back. The invitation to the château has n't come — and we 're not safely in the gorges yet."

"Nor shan't be soon, if this sort of thing keeps on," remarked the chauffeur. "We shall have to lunch at Alais."

"You say that as if it was the devil's kitchen."

"There 's probably first rate cooking in the devil's kitchen; I 'm not so sure about the inns at Alais."

"But it 's arranged to picnic on the road to-day for the first time, you know. They put up such good things at Nîmes, and I was to make coffee in the tea-basket."

"That 's why I wanted to get on. Picnic country does n't begin till after Alais. Who could lunch on a dull roadside like this? Only a starving tramp would n't get indigestion."

It was true, and I began to detest the unknown Alais. Perhaps, after all, we might sweep through the place, I thought, without the idea of lunch occurring to the passengers. But Mr. Dane's heart-to-heart talk with the Aigle resulted in quite a lengthy argument; and no sooner did a town group itself in the distance than Sir Samuel knocked on the glass behind us.

"What place is this?" he asked.

"Alais," was the answer the chauffeur made with his lips, while his eyebrows said "I told you so!" to me.

"I think we 'd better lunch here," Sir Samuel went on. And the arrival of a princely blue motor car at the nearest inn was such a shock to the nerves of the landlady and her staff that the interval before lunch was as long and solemn as the Dead March in Saul. To show what he could do in an emergency, the chef slaughtered and cooked every animal within reach for miles around.

They appeared in a procession, according to their kind, when necessary disguised in rich and succulent sauces which did credit to the creator's imagination; and there

were reserve forces of cakes, preserves, and puddings, all of which coldly furnished forth the servants' meal when they had served our betters.

It was nearly three o'clock when we were ready to leave Alais, and the chauffeur had on his bronze-statue expression as he took his seat beside me after starting the car.

"What 's the matter?" I asked.

"Nothing," said he, "except that I don't know where we 're likely to lay our heads to-night."

"Where do you want to lay them?" I inquired flippantly. "Any gorge will do for mine."

"It won't for Lady Turnour's. But it may have to, and in that case she will probably snap yours off."

"Cousin Catherine has often told me it was of no use to me, except to show my hair. But are n't there hotels in the gorge of the Tarn?"

"There are in summer, but they 're not open yet, and the inns — well, if Fate casts us into one, Lady Turnour will have a fit. My idea was: a splendid run through some of the wildest and most wonderful scenery of France — little known to tourists, too — and then to get out of the Tarn region before dark. We may do it yet, but if we have any more trouble ——"

He did n't finish the sentence, because, as if he had been calling for it, the trouble came. I thought that an invisible enemy had fired a revolver at us from behind a tree, but it was only a second tyre, bursting out loud, instead of in a ladylike whisper, like the other.

Down got Mr. Dane, with the air of a condemned criminal who wants every one to believe that he is delighted

to be hanged. Down got I also, to relieve the car of my weight during the weird process of "jacking up," though the chauffeur assured me that I did n't matter any more than a fly on the wheel. Our birds of paradise remained in their cage, however, Lady Turnour glaring whenever she caught a glimpse of the chauffeur's head, as if he had bitten that hole in the tyre. But before us loomed mountains — disagreeable-looking mountains — more like *embonpoints* growing out of the earth's surface than ornamental elevations. On the tops there was something white, and I preferred having Lady Turnour glare at the chauffeur, no matter how unjustly, than that her attention should be caught by that far, silver glitter.

Suddenly my brother paused in his work, unbent his back, stood up, and regarded his thumb with as much intentness as if he were an Indian fakir pledged to look at nothing else for a stated number of years. He pinched the nail, shook his hand, and then, abandoning it as an object of interest, was about to inflate the mended tyre when I came forward.

"You 've hurt yourself," I said.

"I did n't know you were looking," he replied, fixing the air-pump. "Your back seemed to be turned."

"A girl who has n't got eyes in the back of her head is incomplete. What have you done to your hand?"

"Nothing much. Only picked up a splinter somehow. I tried to get it out and could n't. It will do when we arrive somewhere."

"Let me try," I said.

"Nonsense! A little flower of a thing like you! Why, you 'd faint at the sight of blood."

"Oh, is it bleeding?" I asked, horrified, and forgetting to hide my horror.

He laughed. "Only a drop or two. Why, you 're as white as your name, child."

"That 's only at the thought," I said. "I don't mind the *sight*, although I *do* think if Providence had made blood a pale green or a pretty blue it would have been less startling than bright red. However, it 's too late to change that now. And if you don't show me your thumb, I 'll have hysterics instantly, and perhaps be discharged by Lady Turnour on the spot."

At this awful threat, which I must have looked terribly capable of carrying out, he obeyed without a word.

A horrid little, thin slip of iron had gone deep down between the nail and the flesh, and large drops of the most sensational crimson were splashing down on to the ground.

"The idea of your driving like that!" I exclaimed fiercely. But my voice quivered. "One, two, three!" I said to myself, and then pulled. I wanted to shut my eyes, but pride forbade, so I kept them as wide open as if my lids had been propped up with matches. Out came the splinter of metal, and seeing it in my hand — so long, so sharp — things swam in rainbow colours for a few seconds; but I was outwardly calm as a Stoic, and wrapped the thumb in my handkerchief despite my brother's protests.

"Brave child," he said. "Thank you."

I looked up at him, and his eyes had such a beautiful expression that a queer tenderness began stirring in my heart, just as a young bird stirs in a nest when it wakes

up. I could n't help having the impression that he felt the same thing for me at the moment. It was as if our thoughts rushed together, and then flew away in a hurry, frightened at something they 'd seen. He dashed back to his tyre pumping, and I pranced away down the road to look intently at a small white stone, as if it had been a pearl of price.

Afterward I stooped and picked it up. "You 're a kind of little milestone in my life," I said to it. "I think I 'd like to keep you, I hardly know why." And I slipped it into the pocket of my coat.

Every sort of work that you do on a motor-car always seems to take exactly half an hour. You may *think* it will be twenty minutes, but you know in your heart that it will be thirty, to the last second. The people in the glass-house lost count of time after the first, through playing some ghastly kind of double dummy bridge, and as they seemed cheerful Lady Turnour and her dummy were evidently winning. But Mr. Dane did not lose count, I was sure; and when we had started again, and got a mile or two beyond Alais, he looked somewhat sternly at the mountains which no longer appeared ill-shapen. We mounted toward them over the heads of their children the foothills, and came into a region which promised wild picturesqueness. There was an extra thrill, too, because the mountains were the Cévennes, where Robert Louis Stevenson wandered with his Modestine, and slept under the stars. Judging from the gravity of the chauffeur's face he was not sure that we, too, might not have to sleep under the stars (if any), a far less care-free company than "R. L. S." and his donkey.

Sir Samuel has now exchanged cards for a Taride map, which he often studied with no particular result beyond mental satisfaction, as he generally held it upside down and got his information by contraries. But at a straggling hillside village where two roads bifurcated he suddenly became excited. Down went the window, and out popped his head.

"You go to the left here!" he shouted, as the Aigle was winging gracefully to the right.

"I think you 're mistaken, sir," replied the chauffeur, stopping while the car panted reproachfully. "I know the 'Routes de France' says left, but they told me at Alais a new road had now been finished, and the old one condemned."

"Well, I 'd take anything I heard there with a grain of salt," said Sir Samuel. "How should they know? Motor-cars are strange animals to them. If there were a new road the "Routes" would give it, and *I* vote for the left."

"Whose car is it, anyway?" Lady Turnour was heard to murmur, not having forgiven my Fellow Worm two burst tyres and a broken chain.

Since chauffeurs should be seen and not heard, Mr. Jack Dane looked volumes and said not a word. Backing the big Aigle, who was sulking in her bonnet, he put her nose to the left. Now we were making straight, almost as the crow flies, for the Cevennes; but luckily for Lady Turnour's peace of mind the snowy tops were hidden from sight behind other mountains' shoulders as we approached. A warning chill was in the air, like the breath of a ghost; but it could not find its way through the glass; and a few

cartloads of oranges which we passed opportunely looked warm and attractive, giving a delusive suggestion of the south to our road.

It was gipsy-land, too, for we met several tramping families: boldly handsome women, tall, dark men and boys with eagle eyes, and big silver buttons so well cared for they must have been precious heirlooms. "'Steal all you can, and keep your buttons bright,' is a gipsy father's advice to his son," said Jack Dane, as we wormed up the road toward a pass where the brown mountains seemed to open a narrow, mysterious doorway. So, fold upon fold shut us in, as if we had entered a vast maze from which we might never find our way out; and soon there was no trace of man's work anywhere, except the zigzag lines of road which, as we glanced up or down, looked like thin, pale brown string tied as a child ties a "cat's-cradle." We were in the ancient fastnesses of the Camisards; and this world of dark rock under clouding sky was so stern, so wildly impressive, that it seemed a country hewn especially for religious martyrs, a last stand for such men as fought and died praying, calling themselves "enfants de Dieu." Bending out from the front seat of the motor, my gaze plunged far down into the beds of foaming rivers, or soared far up to the dazzling white world of snow and steely sky toward which we steadily forged on. Oh, there was no hope of hiding the snow now from those whom it might concern! But Lady Turnour still believed, perhaps, that we should avoid it.

The higher the Aigle rose, climbing the wonderful road of snakelike twistings and turnings above sheer precipices,

the more thrilling was the effect of the savage landscape upon our souls—those of us who consciously possess souls.

We had met nobody for a long time now; for, since leaving the region of pines, we seemed to have passed beyond the road-mender zone, and the zone of waggons loaded with dry branches like piled elks' horns. Still, as one could never be sure what might not be lurking behind some rocky shoulder, where the road turned like a tight belt, our musical siren sang at each turn its gay little mocking notes.

After a lonely mountain village, named St. Germain-en-Calberte, and famous only because the tyrant-priest Chayla was burned there, the surface of the road changed with startling abruptness. Till this moment we 'd known no really bad roads anywhere, and almost all had been as white as snow, as pink as rose leaves, and smooth as velvet; but suddenly the Aigle sank up to her expensive ankles in deep, thick mud.

"Hullo, what 's this bumping? Anything wrong with the car?"

Out popped Sir Samuel's anxious head from its luxurious cage.

"The trouble is with the road," answered the chauffeur, without so much as an "I told you so!" expression on his face. "I 'm afraid we 've come to that *déclassée* part."

Poor Sir Samuel looked so humble and sad that I was sorry for him. "My mistake!" he murmured meekly. "Had we better turn after all?"

"I fear we can't turn, or even run back, sir," said Mr. Dane. "The road 's so bad and so narrow, it would be rather risky."

This was a mild way of putting it; and he was considerate in not mentioning the precipice which fell abruptly down under the uneven shelf he generously called a road.

Sir Samuel gave a wary glance down, and said no more. Luckily Lady Turnour, sitting inside her cage, on the side of the rock wall we were following up the mountains, could not see that unpleasant drop under the shelf, or even quite realize that she was on a shelf at all. Her husband sat down by her side, more quietly than he had got up, even forgetting to shut the window; but he was soon reminded of that duty.

"Are you frightened?" the chauffeur asked me; and I thought it no harm to answer: "Not when you 're driving."

"Do you mean that? Or is it only an empty little compliment?" he catechized me, though his eyes did not leave the narrow slippery road, up which he was steering with a skill of a woman who aims for the eye of a delicate needle with the end of a thread a size too big.

"I mean it!" I said.

"I 'm glad," he answered. "I was going to tell you not to be nervous, for we shall win through all right with this powerful car. But now I will save my breath."

"You may," I said, "I 'm very happy." And so I was, though I had the most curious sensation in my toes, as if they were being done up in curl papers.

On we climbed, creeping along the high shelf which was so untidily loaded with rough, fallen stones and layers of mud, powdered with bits of ice from the rocky wall that seemed sheathed in glass. Icicles dangled heavy diamond fringes low over the roof of the car; snow

lay in dark hollows which the sun could never reach even in summer noons; and as we ploughed obstinately on, always mounting, the engine trembling, our fat tyres splashed into a custardy slush of whitish brown. The shelf had been slippery before; now, slopping over with this thick mush of melting snow or mud, it was like driving through gallons of ice pudding. The great Aigle began to tremble and waltz on the surface that was no surface; yet it would have been impossible to go back. I saw by my companion's set face how real was the danger we were in; I saw, as the car skated first one way, then another, that there were but a few inches to spare on either side of the road shelf; the side which was a rocky wall, the side which was a precipice; I saw, too, how the man braced himself to this emergency, when three lives besides his own depended on his nerve and skill, almost upon his breath — for it seemed as if a breath too long, a breath too short, might hurl us down — down — I dared not look or think how far. Yet the fixed look of courage and self-confidence on his face was inspiring. I trusted him completely, and I should have been ashamed to feel fear.

But it was at this moment, when all hung upon the driver's steadiness of eye and hand, that Lady Turnour chose to begin emitting squeaks of childish terror. I had n't known I was nervous, and only found out that I was highly strung by the jump I gave at her first shriek behind me. If the chauffeur had started — but he did n't. He showed no sign of having heard.

I would not venture to turn, and look round, lest the slightest movement of my body so near his arm might

disturb him; but poor Sir Samuel, driven to desperation by his wife's hysterical cries, pushed down the glass again.

"Good Lord, Dane, this is appalling!" he said. "My wife can't bear it. Is n't it possible for us to — to ——" he paused, not knowing how to end so empty a sentence.

"All that 's possible to do I 'm doing," returned the chauffeur, still looking straight ahead. And instead of advising the foolish old bridegroom to shake the bride or box her ears, as surely he was tempted to do, he added calmly that her ladyship must not be too anxious. We were going to get out of this all right, and before long.

"Tell him to go back. I *shall* go back!" wailed Lady Turnour.

"Dearest, we can't!" her husband assured her.

"Then tell him to stop and let me get out and walk. This is too awful. He wants to kill us."

"*Can* you stop and let us get out?" pleaded Sir Samuel.

"To stop here would be the most dangerous thing we could do," was the answer.

"You hear, Emmie, my darling."

"I hear. Impudence to dictate to you! Whatever *you* are willing to do, *I* won't be bearded."

One would have thought she was an oyster. But she was quite right in not wishing to add a beard to her charms, as already a moustache was like those coming events that cast a well-defined shadow before. For an instant I half thought that Mr. Dane would try and stop, her tone was so furious, but he drove on as steadily as if he had not a passenger more fit for Bedlam than for a motor-car.

Seeing that Dane stuck like grim death to his determination and his steering-wheel, Sir Samuel shut the window and devoted himself to calming his wife who, I imagine, threatened to tear open the door and jump out. The important thing was that he kept her from doing it, perhaps by bribes of gold and precious stones, and the Aigle moved on, writhing like a wounded snake as she obeyed the hand on the wheel. If the slightest thing should go wrong in the steering-gear, as we read of in other motor-cars each time we picked up a newspaper — but other cars were not in charge of Mr. Jack Dane. I felt sure, somehow, that nothing would ever go wrong with a steering-gear of whose destiny he was master.

Not a word did he speak to me, yet I felt that my silence of tongue and stillness of body was approved of by him. He had said that we would be "out of this before long," so I believed we would; but suddenly my eyes told me that something worse than we had won through was in store for us ahead.

CHAPTER XXI

ALL this time we 'd been struggling up hill, but abruptly we came to the top of the ascent, and had to go sliding down, along the same shelf, which now seemed narrower than before. Looking ahead, it appeared to have been bitten off round the edge here and there, just at the stiffest zigs and zags of the nightmare road. And far down the mountain the way went winding under our eyes, like the loops of a lasso; short, jerky loops, as we came to each new turn, to which the length of our chassis forced us to bow and curtsey on our slippery, sliding skates. Forward the Aigle had to go until her bonnet hung over the precipice, then to be cautiously backed for a foot or two, before she could glide ticklishly down the next steep gradient.

Involuntarily I shrank back against the cushions, bit my lip, and had to force myself not to catch at the arm of the seat in those giddy seconds when it felt as if we were dropping from sky to earth in a leaky balloon; but if the blood in your veins has been put there by decent ancestors who trail gloriously in a long line behind you, I suppose it 's easier for you not to be a coward than it is for people like the Turnours, who have to be their own ancestors, or buy them at auctions.

The first words my companion spoke to me came as the valley below us narrowed. "Look there," he said,

nodding; and my gaze followed the indication, to light joyously upon a distant *col*, where clustered a friendly little group of human habitations.

The sight was like a signal to relax muscles, for though there was a long stretch still of the appalling road between us and the *col*, the eye seemed to grasp safety, and cling to it.

"Beyond that *col* we shall strike the *route nationale*, which we missed by coming this way," said Mr. Dane; and then it was the motor only which gave voice, until we were close to the oasis in our long desert of danger. That comforting voice was like a song of triumph as the Aigle paused to rest at last before a *gendarmerie* and a rough, mountain inn. Some men who had been standing in front of the buildings gave us a hearty cheer as we drew up at the door, and grinned a pleasant welcome.

"We have been watching you a long way off," said a tall gendarme to the chauffeur, "and to tell the truth we were not happy. That road has been *déclassée* for some time now, and is one of the worst in the country, even in fine weather. It was not a very safe experiment, monsieur; but we have been saying to each other it was a fine way to show off your magnificent driving."

Laughing, Jack Dane assured the gendarme that it was not done with any such object, and Sir Samuel, out of the car by this time, with the indignant Lady Turnour, wanted the conversation translated. I obeyed immediately, and he too praised his chauffeur, in a nice manly way which made me the more sorry for him because he had succeeded in marrying his first love.

"I should like to pay you compliments too," said I

hurriedly, in a low voice, when Sir Samuel and Lady Turnour had gone to the inn door to revive themselves with blood-warming cordials after their thrilling experience. "I should like to, only — it seems to go beyond compliments."

"I hate compliments, even when I deserve them, which I don't now," replied the young man whom I 'd been comparing sentimentally in my mind with the sun-god, steering his chariot of fire up and down the steeps of heaven from dawn to sunset. "And I 'd hate them above all from my — from my little pal."

Nothing he could have named me would have pleased me as well. During the wild climb, and wilder drop, we had hardly spoken to each other, yet I felt that I could never misunderstand him, or try frivolously to aggravate him again. He was too good for all that, too good to be played with.

"You are a man — a real *man*," I said to myself. I felt humble compared with him, an insignificant wisp of a thing, who could never do anything brave or great in life; and so I was proud to be called his "pal." When he asked if I, too, did n't need some cordial, I only laughed, and said I had just had one, the strongest possible.

"So have I," he answered. "And now we ought to be going on. Look at those shadows, and it 's a good way yet to Florac, at the entrance of the gorge."

Already night was stretching long gray, skeleton fingers into the late sunshine, as if to warm them at its glow before snuffing it out.

It was easier to say we ought to go, however, than to

induce Lady Turnour to get into the car again, after all she had endured, and after that "bearding" which evidently rankled still. She had not forgiven the chauffeur for the courage which for her was merely obstinacy and impudence, nor her husband for encouraging him; but the glow of the cordial in her veins warmed the cockles of her heart in spite of herself (I should think her heart was *all* cockles, if they are as bristly as they sound); and as it would be dull to stop on this *col* for the rest of her life, she at last agreed to encounter further dangers.

"Come, come, that 's my brave little darling!" we heard Sir Samuel coo to her, and dared not meet each other's eyes.

The road, from which we ought never to have strayed, was splendid in engineering and surface, and we winged down to earth in a flight from the clouds. Ice and snow were left behind on the heights, and the Aigle gaily careered down the slopes like a wild thing released from a weary bondage. As we whirled earthwards, embankments and railway bridges showed here and there by our side, but we lost all such traces of feverish modern civilization as we swept into the dusky hollow at the bottom of which Florac lay, like a sunken town engulfed by a dark lake.

We did not pause in the curiously picturesque place, which looked no more than a village, with its gray-brown houses and gray brown shadows huddled confusedly together. Probably it looked much the same when the Camisards used to hide themselves and their gunpowder in caves near by; and certainly scarce a stone or brick had been added or removed since Stevenson's eyes saw

the town, and his pen wrote of it, as he turned away there from the Tarn region, instead of being the first Englishman to explore it. And what a wild region it looked as we and the Aigle were swallowed up in the yawning mouth of the gorge!

In an every-day world, above and outside, no doubt it was sunset, as on other evenings which we had known and might know again; but this hidden, underground country had no place in an every-day world. It seemed almost as if my brother and I (I can't count the Turnours, for they were so unsuitable that they temporarily ceased to exist for us) were explorers arriving in an air-ship, unannounced, upon the planet Mars.

The moon, a glinting silver shield, shimmered pale through ragged red clouds like torn and blood-stained flags; and the walls of the gorge into which we penetrated, bleakly glittering here and there where the moon touched a vein of mica, were the many-windowed castles of the Martians, who did not yet know that they had visitors from another world.

There were fantastic villages, too, whose builders and inhabitants must have drawn their architectural inspiration from strange mountain forms and groupings, after the fashion of those small animals who defend themselves by looking as much as possible like their surroundings. And if by some mistake we had n't landed on Mars, we were in gnome-land, wherever that might be.

There was no ordinary twilight here. The brown-gray of rocks and wild rock-villages was flushed with red and shadowed with purple; but as the moon drank up the ruddy draught of sunset, the landscape crouched

and hunched its shoulders into shapes ever more extraordinary. The white light spilled down from the tilted crescent like silver rain, and bleached the few pink peach-blossoms, which bloomed timidly under the shelter of snow-mountains, to the pallor of fluttering night-moths, throwing out their clusters in sharp contrast against dark rocks. The River Tarn, gliding onward through the gorge toward the Garonne, was scaled with steel on its emerald back, like a twisting serpent. Over a bed of gravel, white as scattered pearls, the sequined lengths coiled on; and the snake-green water, the strange burnt-coral vegetation like a trail of blood among the pearls, the young foliage of trees, filmy as wisps of blowing gauze, were the only vestiges of colour that the moon allowed to live in the under-world which we had reached. But above, on the roof of that world — "les Causses" — where we had left ice and snow, we could see purple chimneys of rock rising to an opal sky, and now and then a mountain bon-fire, like a great open basket of witch-rubies, glowing beneath the moon.

"This is the last haunt of the fairies," I said under my breath, but the man by my side heard the murmur.

"I thought you 'd find that out," he said. "Trust you to get telepathic messages from the elf-folk! Why, this gorge teems with fairy tales and legends of magic, black and white. The Rhine Valley and the Black Forest together have n't as many or as wonderful ones. I should like you to hear the stories from some of the village people or the boatmen. They believe them to this day."

"Why, *of course*," I said, gravely. Then, a question wanted so much to be asked, that when I refused it asked

itself in a great hurry, before I could even catch it by its lizard-tail. "Was *she* with you when you were here before?"

"She?" he echoed. "I don't understand."

"The lady of the battlement garden," I explained, ashamed and repentant now that it was too late.

He did not answer for a moment. Then he laughed, an odd sort of laugh. "Oh, my romance of the battlement garden? Yes, she was with me in this gorge. She is with me now."

"I wonder if she is thinking about you to-night?" I asked, knowing he meant that the mysterious lady was carried along on this journey in his spirit, as I was in the car.

"Not seriously, if at all," he answered, with what seemed to me a forced lightness. "But I am thinking of her — thoughts which she will probably never know."

Then I did wish that I, too, had a hidden sorrow in my life, a man in the background, but as unlike Monsieur Charretier as possible, for whose love I could call upon my brother's sympathy. And I suppose it was because he had some one, while I had no one, in this strange, hidden fairyland like a secret orchard of jewelled fruits, that I felt suddenly very sad.

He pointed out Castlebouc, a spellbound château on a towering crag that held it up as if on a tall black finger, above a village which might have fallen off a canvas by Gustave Doré. Farther on lay a strange place called Prades, memorable for a huge buttress of rock exactly like the carcass of a mammoth petrified and hanging on a wall. Then, farther on still, over the black face of the

rocks flashed a whiteness of waving waters, pouring cascades like bridal veils whose lace was made of mountain snows.

"Here we are at Ste. Enemie," said Mr. Dane. "Don't you remember about her — 'King Dagobert's daughter, ill-fated and fair to look upon?' Well, at this village of hers we must either light our lamps or rest for the night, which ever Sir Samuel — I mean her ladyship — decides."

So he stopped, in a little town which looked a place of fairy enchantment under the moon. And as the song of the motor changed into jogging prose with the putting on of the brakes, open flew the door of an inn. Nothing could ever have looked half so attractive as the rosy glow of the picture suddenly revealed. There was a miniature hall and a quaint stairway — just an impressionist glimpse of both in play of firelight and shadow. With all my might I willed Lady Turnour to want to stay the night. The whole force of my mind pressed upon that part of her "transformation" directly over the deciding-cells of her brain.

The chauffeur jumped down, and respectfully inquired the wishes of his passengers. Would they remain here, if there were rooms to be had, and take a boat in the morning to make the famous descent of the Tarn, while the car went on to meet them at Le Rosier, at the end of the Gorge? Or would they, in spite of the darkness, risk ——"

"We 'll risk nothing," Lady Turnour promptly cut him short. "We 've run risks to-day till I feel as if I 'd been in my grave and pulled out again. No more for me, by dark, *thank* you, if I have to sleep in the car!"

"I hope your ladyship won't have to do that," returned my Fellow Worm, alive though trodden under foot. "I have never spent a night in Ste. Enemie, but I 've lunched here, and the food is passable. I should think the rooms would be clean, though rough ——"

"I don't find this country attractive enough to pay us for any hardships," said the mistress of our fate. "I never was in such a dreary, God-forsaken waste! Are there no decent hotels to get at?"

Patiently he explained to her, as he had to me, how the better hotels which the Gorge of the Tarn could boast were not yet open for the summer. "If we had not had such a chapter of accidents we should have run through as far as this early in the day, and could then have followed the good motoring road down the gorge, seeing its best sights almost as well as from the river; but ——"

"Whose fault were the accidents, I should like to know?" demanded the lady. But obviously there was no answer to that question from a servant to a mistress.

"Shall I inquire about rooms?" the chauffeur asked, calmly.

And it ended in Sir Samuel going in with him, conducted by a smiling and somewhat excited young person who had been holding open the door.

They must have been absent for ten minutes, which seemed half an hour. Then, when Lady Turnour had begun muttering to herself that she was freezing, Sir Samuel bustled back, in a cheerfulness put on awkwardly, like an ill-fitting suit of armour in a pageant.

"My dear, they 're very full, but two French gentlemen

were kind enough to give up their room to us, and the landlady 'll put them out somewhere ——"

"What, you and I both squashed into one room!" exclaimed her ladyship, forgetful, in haughty horror, of her lodging-house background.

"But it 's all they have. It 's that or the motor, since you won't risk ——"

"Oh, very well, then, I suppose it can't *kill* me!" groaned the bride, stepping out of the car as if from tumbril to scaffold.

What a way to take an adorable adventure! I was sorry for Sir Samuel, but dimly I felt that I ought to be still sorrier for a woman temperamentally unable to enjoy anything as it ought to be enjoyed. Next year, maybe, she will look back on the experience and tell her friends that it was "fun"; but oh, the pity of it, not to gather the flowers of the Present, to let them wither, and never pluck them till they are dried wrecks of the Past!

I was ready to dance for joy as I followed her ladyship into the miniature hall which, if not quite so alluring when viewed from the inside, had a friendly, welcoming air after the dark mountains and cold white moonlight. I did n't know yet what arrangements had been made for my stable accommodation, if any, but I felt that I should n't weep if I had to sit up all night in a warm kitchen with a purry cat and a snory dog.

The stairs were bare, and our feet clattered crudely as we went up, lighted by a stout young girl with bared arms, who carried a candle. "What a hole!" snapped Lady Turnour; but when the door of a bedroom was opened for her by the red-elbowed one, she cried out in

despair. "Is *this* where you expect me to sleep, Samuel? I 'm surprised at you! I 'm not sure it is n't an insult!"

"My darling, what can *I* do?" implored the unfortunate bridegroom.

The red-elbowed maiden, beginning to take offence, set the candlestick down on a narrow mantelpiece, with a slap, and removed herself from the room with the dignity of a budding Jeanne d'Arc. We all three filed in, I in the rear; and for one who won't accept the cup of life as the best champagne the prospect certainly was depressing.

The belongings of the "two gentlemen" who were giving up their rights in a lady's favour, had not yet been transferred to the "somewhere outside." Those slippers under the bed could have belonged to no species of human being but a commercial traveller; and on the table and one chair were scattered various vague collars, neckties, and celluloid cuffs. There was no fire in the fireplace, nor, by the prim look of it, had there ever been one in the half century or so since necessity called for an inn to be built.

I snatched from the chair a waistcoat tangled up in some suspenders, and Lady Turnour, flinging herself down in her furs, burst out crying like a cross child.

"If this is what you call adventure, Samuel, I hate it," she whimpered. "You *would* bring me motoring! I want a fire. I want hot water. I want them now. And I want the room cleared and all these awful things taken away this instant. I don't consider them *decent*. Whatever happens, I shan't dream of getting into that bed to-night, and I don't feel now as if I should eat any dinner."

Distracted, Sir Samuel looked piteously at me, and I sprang to the rescue. I assured her ladyship that everything should be made nice for her before she quite knew what had happened. If she would have patience for *five* minutes, *only* five, she should have everything she wanted. I would see to it myself. With that I ran away, followed by Sir Samuel's grateful eyes. But, once downstairs, I realized what a task I had set myself.

The whole establishment had gone mad over us. There had been enough to do before, with the house full of *ces messieurs, les commis voyageurs*, but it was comparatively simple to do for them. For *la noblesse Anglaise* it was different.

There were no men to be seen, and the three or four women of the household were scuttling about crazily in the kitchen, like hens with their heads cut off. The patronage was so illustrious and so large; there was so much to do and all at once, therefore nobody tried to do anything but cackle and plump against one another.

Enter Me, a whirlwind, demanding an immediate fire and hot water for washing. Landlady and assistants were aghast. There had never been anything in any bedroom fireplace of the inn less innocent than paper flowers; bedroom fireplaces were for paper flowers; while as for washing it was a *bêtise* to want to do so in the evening, especially with hot water, which was a madness at any time, unless by doctor's orders. Besides, did not mademoiselle see that everybody had more than they could do already, in preparing dinner for the great people! There was plenty of time to put the bedroom in order when it should be bedtime. If the noble lady

were so fatigued that she must lie down, why, the bed had only been slept in for one night by two particularly sympathetic messieurs. It would be *presque un crime* to change linen after so brief an episode, nevertheless for a client of such importance it should eventually be done.

For a moment I was dashed by this volume of eloquence, but not for long, for I was pledged. A wild glance round the kitchen showed me a kettle standing empty in a corner. I seized it, and though it was heavy, swung it to an open door near which I could see a ghostly pump. I flew out, and seized that ghost by its long and rigid arm.

"Let me," said a voice.

It was the voice of Mr. Jack Dane.

CHAPTER XXII

YOU dear!" I thought. But I only said, "How sweet of you!" in a nice, ladylike tone. And while he pumped the wettest and coldest water I ever felt, he drily advised me to call him "Adversity" if I found his "uses sweet," since he was n't to be Jack for me. What if he had known that I always call him "Jack" to myself?

He not only pumped the kettle full, but carried it into the kitchen, and bullied or flattered the goddesses there until they gave him the hottest place for it on the red-hot stove. Meanwhile, as my eyes accustomed themselves to darkness after light, I spied in the courtyard of the pump a shed piled with wood; and my uncomfortably prophetic soul said that if Lady Turnour were to have a fire, the woodpile and I must do the trick together. Souls can be mistaken though, sometimes, if consciences never can; and Brother Adversity contradicted mine by darting out again to see what I was doing, ordering me to stop, and doing it all himself.

I ran to beg for immediate bed-linen while he annexed a portion of the family woodpile, and we met outside my mistress's door. On the threshold I confidently expected her grateful ladyship to say: "What *are* you doing with that wood, Dane?" But she was too much crushed under her own load of cold and discomfort to object to

his and wish it transferred to me. I 'd knelt down to make a funeral pyre of paper roses, when in a voice low yet firm my brother ordered me to my feet. This was n't work for girls when men were about, he grumbled; and perhaps it was as well, for I never made a wood fire in my life. As for him, he might have been a fire-tamer, so quickly did the flames leap up and try to lick his hands. When it was certain that they could n't go stealthily crawling away again, he shot from the room, and in two minutes was back with the big kettle of hot water under whose weight I should have staggered and fallen, perhaps.

By this time I had made the bed, and tumbled all reminders of the two "sympathetic messieurs" ruthlessly into no-man's land outside the door. Things began to look more cheerful. Lady Turnour brightened visibly; and when appetizing smells of cooking stole through the wide cracks all round the door she decided that, after all, she would dine.

It was not until after I had seen her descend with her husband, and had finished unpacking, that I had a chance to think of my own affairs. Then I did wonder on what shelf I was to lie, or on what hook hang, for the night. I had no information yet as regarded my own sleeping or eating, but both began to assume importance in my eyes, and I went down to learn my fate. Where was I to dine? Why, in the kitchen, to be sure, since the *salle à manger* was in use as a sitting-room until bedtime. As for sleeping — why, that was a difficult matter. It was true that the English milord had spoken of a room for me, but in the press of business it had been forgotten. What a pity that the chauffeur and I were not a married couple, *n'est pas?*

That would make everything quite simple. But — as it was, no doubt there was a box-room, and matters would arrange themselves when there was time to attend to them.

"Matters have already arranged themselves," announced Mr. Jack Dane, from the door of the pump-court. "I heard Sir Samuel speak about your accommodation, and I saw that nothing was being done, so I discovered the box-room, and it is now ready, all but bed-covering. And for fear there might be trouble about that, I 've put Lady Turnour's cushions and rugs on the alleged bed. Would you like to have a look at your quarters now, or are you too hungry to care?"

"I 'm not too hungry to thank you," I exclaimed. "You are a kind of genie, who takes care of the poor who have neither lamps nor rings to rub."

"Better not thank me till you 've seen the place," said he. "It 's a villainous den; but I did n't think any one here would be likely to do better with it than I would. Anyhow, you 'll find hot water. I unearthed — literally — another kettle. And it 's the first door at the top of the back stairs."

I flew, or rather stumbled, up the ladder-like stairway, with a candle which I snatched from the high kitchen mantelpiece, and at the top I laughed out, gaily. In the narrow passage was a barricade of horrors which my knight had dragged from the box-room. On strange old hairy trunks of cowhide he had piled broken chairs, bandboxes covered with flowered wall-paper, battered clocks, chipped crockery, fire-irons, bundles done up in blankets, and a motley collection of unspeakable odds

and ends that would have made a sensational jumble sale. I opened the low door, and peeped into the room with which such liberties had been taken for my sake. Although it was no more than a store cupboard, my wonderful brother had contrived to give it quite an air of coziness. The tiny window was open, and was doing its best to drive out mustiness. A narrow hospital cot stood against the wall, spread with a mattress quite an inch thick, and piled with the luxurious rugs and cushions from the motor car. I was sure Lady Turnour would have preferred my sitting up all night or freezing coverless rather than I should degrade her possessions by making use of them; but Mr. Dane evidently had n't thought her opinion of importance compared with her maid's comfort. Two wooden boxes, placed one upon another, formed a wash-hand stand, which not only boasted a beautiful blue tin basin, but a tumbler, a caraffe full of water, and a not-much-cracked saucer ready for duty as a soap-dish. The top box was covered with a rough, clean towel, evidently filched from the kitchen, and this piece of extra refinement struck me as actually touching. A third box standing on end and spread with another towel, proclaimed itself a dressing-table by virtue of at least half a looking glass, lurking in one corner of a battered frame, like a sinister, partially extinguished eye. Other furnishings were a kitchen chair and a small clothes-horse, to compensate for the absence of wall-hooks or wardrobe. On the bare floor — oh, height of luxury! —lay the fleecy white rug whose high mission it was to warm the toes of Lady Turnour when motoring. On the floor beside the box wash-hand stand, a small

kettle was pleasantly puffing, doing its best to heat the room with its gusty breath; and the clothes-horse had a saddle of towels which I shrewdly suspected had been intended for her ladyship or some other guest of importance in the house.

How these wonders had been accomplished in such a short space of time, and by a man, too, would have passed my understanding, had I not begun to know what manner of man the chauffeur was. And to think that there was a woman in the world who had known herself loved by him, yet had been capable of sending him away! If he would do such things as these for an acquaintance, at best a "pal," what would he not do for a woman beloved? I should have liked to duck that creature under the pump in the court, on just such a nipping night as this.

He had not forgotten my dressing bag, which was on the bed, but I could not stop to open it. I had to run down to the kitchen again, and tell him what I thought of his miracles. He was not there, but, at the sound of my voice, he appeared at the door of the court, drying his hands, having doubtless been making his toilet at the accommodating pump. In the crude light of unshaded paraffin lamps with tin reflectors, he looked tired, and I was sharply reminded of the nervous strain he had gone through in that ordeal on the mountains, but he smiled with the delight of a boy when I burst into thanks.

"It was jolly good exercise, and limbered me up a bit, after sitting with my feet on the brake for so long," said he. "May I have my dinner with you?"

My answer was rather enthusiastic, and that seemed

to please him, too. A quarter of an hour later I came down again, having made myself tidy meanwhile, in the room which he had retrieved from the jungle. Had the landlady but had the ordering of the change, my quarters would have been fifty per cent. less attractive, I was sure, and told my brother so.

We were both starving, but there was too much to do in the dining-room for domestics to expect attention. As for Monsieur le Chauffeur, he was informed that the presence of a mechanician would be permitted in the *salle à manger*, though a *femme de chambre* might not enter there. I begged him to go, but, of course, I should have been surprised if he had. "I have a plan worth two of that," he said to me. "Do you remember the picnic preparations we brought from Nîmes? It seems about a week ago, but it was only this morning. We might as well try to eat on a battlefield as in this kitchen, at present, and if we 're kept waiting, we may develop cannibal propensities. What about a picnic *à deux* in the glass cage, with electric illuminations? The water 's still hot in the automatic heater under the floor, and you shall be as warm as toast. Besides, I 'll grab a jug of blazing soup for a first course, and come back for coffee afterward."

I clapped my hands as I used to when a child and my fun-loving young parents proposed an open air fête. "Oh, how too nice!" I cried. "If you don't think the Turnours would be angry?"

"I think the labourers are worthy of their hire," said he. "I 'll fetch your coat for you. No, you 're not to come without it."

The car, it appeared, was lodged in the court; and my brother's prophecies for the success of the picnic were more than fulfilled. Never was such a feast! I got out the gorgeous tea-basket, trembling with a guilty joy, and Jack washed the white and gold cups and plates at the pump between courses, I drying them with cotton waste, which the car generously provided. Besides the cabbage soup and good black coffee, foraging expeditions produced apricot tarts, nuts, and raisins. We both agreed that no food had ever tasted so good, and probably never would again; but I kept to myself one thought which crept into my mind. It seemed to me that nothing would ever be really interesting in my life, when the chauffeur — the terrible, dreaded chauffeur — should have gone out of it forever. In a few weeks — but I would n't think ahead; I put my soul to enjoying every minute, even the tidying of the tea-basket after the picnic was over, for that business he shared with me, like the rest. And when I dreamed, by-and-by in my box-room, that he was polishing my boots, Lady Turnour's boots, the boots of the whole party, I waked up to tell myself that it was most likely true.

CHAPTER XXIII

"YOU selfish little brute!" was my first address to myself as I realized my Me-ness, between waking and sleeping, in the morning at Ste. Enemie. I had never asked Jack where and how he was going to spend the night. Think of that, after all he had done for me!

It was only just dawn, but already there was a stirring under my window. Perhaps it was that which had roused me, not the early prick of an awakening conscience.

The first thing I did to-day was (as it had been yesterday) to bounce up and climb on to a chair to look out of the high window; but it was a very different window and a very different scene. I now discovered that my room gave on the pump court, and to my surprise, I saw that through the blue silk blinds of the Aigle which were all closely drawn, a light was streaming. This was very queer indeed, and must mean something wrong. My imagination pictured a modern highwayman inside, with the electric lamps turned on to help him rifle the car, and I stood on tiptoe, peering out of the tiny aperture which was close under the low ceiling of the box-room. Ought I to scream, and alarm the household, since I knew not where to go and call the chauffeur?

To be sure, there was very little, if anything, of value, which a thief could carry away, but an abandoned villain might revenge himself for disappointment by slashing the tyres, or perhaps even by setting the car on fire.

At the thought of such a catastrophe, which would bring the trip to an end and separate me at once from the society of my brother (I 'm afraid I cared much more about losing him than for the Turnours' loss of their Aigle) I was impelled to run down in my nightgown and *mules* to do battle single-handed with the ruffian; but suddenly, before I had quite decided, out went the light in the blue-curtained glass cage. In another instant the car door opened, and Jack Dane quietly got out.

In a second I understood. I knew now, without asking, where he had spent his night. Poor fellow — after such a day!

Someone spoke to him — someone who had been making that disturbing noise in the woodshed. The household was astir, and I would be astir, too. I did n't yet know what was to happen to-day, but I wanted to know, and I was prepared to find any plan good, since, in a country like this, all roads must lead to Adventures. My one fear was, that if the Turnours took to a boat, I should have to go with them to play cloak-bearer, or hot-water-bag-carrier, while the car whirled away, free and glorious. The thought of a whole day in my master's and mistress's society, undiluted by the saving presence of my adopted brother, was like bolting a great dry crust of yesterday's bread. What an indigestion I should have!

I was too wise, however, to betray the slightest anxiety one way or the other; for if her ladyship suspected me of

presuming to have a preference she would punish me by crushing it, even if inconvenient to herself. I was exquisitely meek and useful, lighting her fire (with wood brought me by Jack) supplying her with hot water, and wrangling with the landlady over her breakfast, which would have consisted of black coffee and unbuttered bread, had it not been for my exertions. Breakfasts more elaborate were unknown at Ste. Enemie; but coaxings and arguments produced boiled eggs, goats' milk, and *confiture*, which I added to the repast, and carried up to Lady Turnour's room.

No definite plans had been made even then; but harassed Sir Samuel told his chauffeur to engage a boat, and have it ready "in case her ladyship had a whim to go in it." The motor was to be in readiness simultaneously, and then the lady could choose between the two at the last moment.

Thus matters stood when my mistress appeared at the front door, hatted and coated. At last she must decide whether she would descend the rapids of the Tarn (quite safe, kind rapids, which had never done their worst enemies any harm), or travel by a newly finished road through the gorge, in the car, missing a few fine bits of scenery and an experience, but, it was to be supposed, enjoying extra comfort. There was the big blue car; there was the swift green river, and on the river a boat with two respectful and not unpicturesque boatmen.

"Ugh! the water looks hideously cold and dangerous," she sighed, shivering in the clear sunlight, despite her long fur coat. "But I have a horror of the motor, since yesterday. I *may* get over it, but it will take me days.

It 's a hateful predicament — between *two* evils, one as bad as the other. I ought n't to have been subjected to it."

"Dane says everyone does go by the river. It 's the thing to do," ventured Sir Samuel, becoming subtle. "They 've put a big foot-warmer in the boat, and you can have your own rugs. There 's a place where we land, by the way, to get a hot lunch."

With a moan, the bride pronounced for the boat, which was a big flat-bottomed punt, as reliable in appearance as pictures of John Bull. I fetched her rugs from the car. She was helped into the boat, and then, as my fate remained to be settled, I asked her in a voice soft as silk what were her wishes in regard to her handmaiden.

"Why, you 'll come with us in the boat, of course. What else did you dream?" she replied sharply.

Down went my heart with a thump like a fish dropping off its hook. But as I would have moved toward the pebbly beach, a champion rode to my defence.

"Your ladyship does n't think a load of five might disturb the balance of the boat?" mildly suggested the chauffeur. "The usual load is two passengers and two boatmen; and though there's no danger in the rapids if ——"

She did not give him time to finish. "Oh, very well, you must stop with the car, Elise," said she. "It is only one inconvenience more, among many. No doubt I can put up with it. Get me the brandy flask out of the tea-basket."

I would have tried to scoop all the green cheese out of the moon for her, if she had asked me, I was so delighted.

And part of my joy was mixed up with the thought that *he* wanted me to be with him. He had actually schemed to get me! . I envied no one in the world, not even the lovely lady of the battlement garden. He was mine for to-day, in spite of her — so there!

Sir Samuel got into the boat, and wrapped his wife in rugs. The boatmen pushed off. Away the flat-bottomed punt slid down the clear green stream, the sun shining, the cascades sparkling, the strange precipices which wall the gorge, copper-tinted in the morning light. It was the most wonderful world; yet Lady Turnour was cackling angrily. Was she afraid? Had she changed her mind? No, the saints be praised! She was only burning holes in her petticoat on the brazier supplied by the hotel! I turned away to hide a smile almost as wicked as a grin, and before I looked round again, the swift stream had swept the boat out of sight round a jutting corner of rock. We were safe. This time it really *was* our world, our car, and our everything. We did n't even need to "pretend."

Ste. Enemie is only at the gates of the gorge — a porter's lodge, so to speak, and in the Aigle we sped on into the fairyland of which we 'd had our first pale, moonlit peep last night. There were castles made by man, and castles made by gnomes; but the gnomes were the better architects. Their dwellings, carved of rock, towered out of the river to a giddy height, and some were broken in half, as if they had been rent asunder by gnome cannon, in gnome battles. There were gnome villages, too, which looked exactly like human habitations, with clustering roofs plastered against the mountain-side.

But the hand of man had not placed one of these stones upon another.

There were gigantic rock statues, and watch-towers for gnomes to warn old-time gnome populations, perhaps, when their enemies, the cave-dwellers, were coming that way from a mammoth-hunt; and there was a wonderful grotto, fitted with doors and windows, a grotto whose occupants must surely have inherited the mansion from their ancestors, the cave-dwellers. Every step of the way History, gaunt and war-stained, stalked beside us, followed hot-foot by his foster-mother, Legend; and the first stories of the one and the last stories of the other were tangled inextricably together.

Legend and history were alike in one regard; both told of brave men and beautiful women; and the people we met as we drove, looked worthy of their forebears who had fought and suffered for religion and independence, in this strange, rock-walled corridor, shared with fairies and gnomes. The men were tall, with great bold, good-natured eyes and apple-red cheeks, to which their indigo blouses gave full value. The women were of gentle mien, with soft glances; and the children were even more attractive than their elders. Tiny girls, like walking dolls, with dresses to the ground, bobbed us curtseys; and sturdy little boys, curled up beside ancient grandfathers, in carts with old boots protecting the brakes, saluted like miniature soldiers, or pulled off their quaint round caps, as they stared in big-eyed wonder at our grand, blue car. For them we were prince and princess, not chauffeur and maid.

Sometimes our road through the gorge climbed high

above the rushing green river, and ran along a narrow shelf overhanging the ravine, but clear of snow and ice; sometimes it plunged down the mountain-side as if on purpose to let us hear the music of the water; and one of these sudden swoops downward brought us in sight of a château so enchanting and so evidently enchanted, that I was sure a fairy's wand had waved for its creation, perhaps only a moment before. When we were gone, it would disappear again, and the fairy would flash down under the translucent water, laughing, as she sent up a spray of emeralds and pearls.

"Of course, it is n't real!" I exclaimed. "But do let 's stop, because such a knightly castle would n't be rude enough to vanish right before our eyes."

"No, it won't vanish, because it 's a most courteous little castle, which has been well brought up, and even though its greatness is gone, tries to live up to its traditions," said Jack. "It always appears to everyone it thinks likely to appreciate it; and I was certain it would be here in its place to welcome you."

We smiled into each other's eyes, and I felt as if the castle were a present from him to me. How I should have loved to have it for mine, to make up for one poor old château, now crumbled hopelessly into ruin, and despised by the least exacting of tourists! Coming upon it unexpectedly in this green dell, at the foot of the precipice, seeing it rise from the water on one side, reflected as in a broken mirror, and draped in young, golden foliage on the other, it really was an ideal castle for a fairy tale. A connoisseur in the best architecture of the Renaissance would perhaps have been ungracious enough

to pick faults; for to a critical eye the turrets and arches might fall short of perfection; and there was little decoration on the time-darkened stone walls, save the thick curtain of old, old ivy; but the fairy grace of the towers rising from the moat of glittering, bright green water was gay and sweet as a song heard in the woods.

"Some beautiful nymph ought to have lived here," I said dreamily, when we had got out of the car. "A nymph whose beauty was celebrated all over the world, so that knights from far and near came to this lovely place to woo her."

"Why, you might have heard the story of the place!" said Jack. "It 's the Château de la Caze, usually called the Castle of the Nymphs, for instead of one, eight beautiful nymphs lived in it. But their beauty was their undoing. I don't quite know why they were called 'nymphs,' for nymphs and naiads had gone out of fashion when they reigned here as Queens of Beauty, in the sixteenth century. But perhaps in those days to call a girl a 'nymph' was to pay her a compliment. It would n't be now, when chaps criticize the 'nymphery' if they go to a dance! Anyhow, these eight sisters, were renowned for their loveliness, and all the unmarried gentlemen of France — according to the story — as well as foreign knights, came to pay court to them. The unfortunate thing was, when the cavaliers saw the eight girls together, they were all so frightfully pretty it was n't possible to choose between them, so the poor gentlemen fought over their rival charms, and were either killed or went away unable to make up their minds. The sad end

was, if you 'll believe me, that all the eight maidens died unmarried, martyrs to their own incomparable charms."

"I can quite believe it," I answered, "and it was n't at all sad, because I 'm sure any girl who had once had this place for her home would have pined in grief at being taken away, even by the most glorious knight of the world."

"Come in and see their boudoir," said the knight who worked, if he did not fight, for me.

So we went in, without the trouble of using battering rams; for alas, the family of the eight nymphs grew tired of their château and the gorge in the dreadful days of the religious wars, and now it is an hotel. It would not receive paying guests until summer, but a good-natured caretaker opened the door for us, and we saw a number of stone-paved corridors, and the nymphs' boudoir.

Their adoring father had ordered their portraits to be painted on the ceiling; and there they remain to this day, simpering sweetly down upon the few bits of ancient furniture made to match the room and suit their taste.

They smiled amiably at us, too, the eight little faces framed in Henrietta Maria curls; and their eyes said to me, "If you want to be happy, *m'amie*, it is better not to be too beautiful; or else not to have any sisters. Or if Providence *will* send you sisters, go away yourself, and visit your plainest friend, till you have got a husband."

Gazing wistfully back, as one does gaze at places one fears never to see again, the Castle of the Nymphs looked like a fantastic water-flower standing up out of the green river, on its thick stem of rock. Then it was gone; for our time was not quite our own, and we dared

not linger, lest the boat with our Betters should arrive at the meeting place before we reached it in the car. But there were compensations, for almost with every moment the gorge grew grander. Cascades sparkled in the sun like blowing diamond-dust. The rocks seemed set with jewels, or patterned with mosaic; and there were caves — caves almost too good to be true. Yet if we could believe our eyes, they were true, even the dark cavern where, once upon a time, lived a scaly dragon who terrorized the whole country for miles around, and had no relish for his meals unless they were composed of the most exquisite young maidens — though he would accept a child as an *hors d'œuvre*. In such a strange world as this, after all, it was no harder to believe in dragons, than in hiding countesses, fed and tended for months upon months by faithful servants, while the red Revolution raged; yet the countess and her cave were vouched for by history, which ignored the dragon and his.

Not only had each mountain at least one cavern, but every really eligible crag had its ruined castle; and each ruin had its romance, which clung like the perfume of roses to a shattered vase. There were rocks shaped like processions of marching monks following uplifted crucifixes; and farther on, one would have thought that half the animals had scrambled out of the ark to a height where they had petrified before the flood subsided. As we wound through the gorge the landscape became so strange, hewn in such immensity of conception, that it seemed prehistoric. We, in the blue car, were anachronisms, or so I felt until I remembered how, in pre-motoring days, I used to think that owning an automobile must be

like having a half-tamed minotaur in the family. As for the Aigle, she was a friendly, not a vicious, monster, and as if to make up for her mistakes of yesterday, she was to-day more like a demi-goddess serving an earthly apprenticeship in fulfilment of a vow than a dragon of any sort. Swinging smoothly round curve after curve, the noble car running free and cooing in sheer joy of fiery life, as she swooped from height to depth, I, too, felt the joy of life as I had hardly ever felt it before. The chauffeur and I did not speak often, but I looked up at him sometimes because of the pleasure I had in seeing and re-seeing the face in which I had come to have perfect confidence; and I fancied from its expression that he felt as I felt.

So we came to Les Vignes, and lunched together at a table set out of doors, close to the car, that she might not be left alone. We had for food a strange and somewhat evil combination; wild hare and wild boar; but they seemed to suit the landscape somehow, as did the mystical music of the conch-shells, blown by passing boatmen. It was like being waked from a dream of old-time romance, by a rude hand shaking one's shoulder, to hear the voices of Sir Samuel and Lady Turnour, he mildly arguing, she disputing, as usual.

Poetry fled like a dryad of some classic wood, scared by a motor omnibus; and, though the gorge as far as Le Rozier was magnificent, and the road all the way to Millau beautiful in the sunset, it was no longer *our* gorge, or *our* road. That made a difference!

CHAPTER XXIV

THERE was a telegram from "Bertie" at Millau. The invitation to the château where he was stopping near Clermont-Ferrand, had been asked for and given. I heard all about it, of course, from the conversation between the bride and groom; for Lady Turnour prides herself on discussing things in my presence, as if I were deaf or a piece of furniture. She has the idea that this trick is a habit of the "smart set"; and she would allow herself to be tarred and feathered, in Directoire style, if she could not be smart at smaller cost.

Nothing was ever more opportune than that telegram, for her ladyship had burnt her frock and chilled her liver in the boat, and though the hotel at Millau was good, she arrived there with the evident intention of making life a burden to Sir Samuel. The news from Bertie changed all that, however; and though the weather was like the breath of icebergs next morning, Lady Turnour was warmed from within. She chatted pleasantly with Sir Samuel about the big luggage which had gone on to Clermont-Ferrand, and asked his advice concerning the becomingness of various dresses. The one unpleasant thing she allowed herself to say, was that "certainly Bertie was n't doing this for nothing," and that his stepfather might take her word for it, Bertie would be neither slow nor shy in naming his reward. But Sir Samuel only

grinned, and appeared rather amused than otherwise at the shrewdness of his wife's insight into the young man's character.

I was conscious that my jacket had n't been made for motoring, when I came out into the sharp morning air and took my place in the Aigle. I was inclined to envy my mistress her fur rugs, but to my surprise I saw lying on my seat a Scotch plaid, plaider than any plaid ever made in Scotland.

"Does that belong to the hotel?" I asked the chauffeur, as he got into the car.

"It belongs to you," said he. "A present from Millau for a good child."

"Oh, you must n't!" I exclaimed.

"But I have," he returned, calmly. "I 'm not going to watch you slowly freezing to death by my side; for it won't be exactly summer to-day. Let me tuck you in prettily."

I groaned while I obeyed. "I 've been an expense to you all the way, because you would n't abandon me to the lions, even in the most expensive hotels, where I knew you would n't have stayed if it had n't been for me. And now, *this!*"

"It cost only a few francs," he tried to reassure me. "We 'll sell it again — afterward, if that will make you happier. But sufficient for the day is the rug thereof — at least, I hope it will be. And don't flaunt it, for if her ladyship sees there 's an extra rug of any sort on board she 'll be clamouring for it by and by."

Northward we started, in the teeth of the wind, which made mine chatter until I began to tingle with the rush

of ozone, which always goes to my head like champagne. Our road was a mere white thread winding loosely through a sinuous valley, and pulled taut as it rose nearer and nearer to the cold, high level of *les Causses*, the roof of that gnome-land where we had journeyed together yesterday. From snow-covered billows which should have been sprayed with mountain wild-flowers by now, a fierce blast pounced down on us like a swooping bird of prey. We felt the swift whirr of its wings, which almost took our breath away, and made the Aigle quiver; but like a bull that meets its enemy with lowered horns, the brave car's bonnet seemed to defy the wind and face it squarely. We swept on toward the snow-reaches whence the wind-torrent came. Soon we were on the flat plateau of the Causse, where last year's faded grass was frosted white, and a torn winding-sheet wrapped the limbs of a dead world. There was no beauty in this death, save the wild beauty of desolation, and a grandeur inseparable from heights. Before us grouped the mountains of Auvergne, hoary headed; and looking down we could see the twistings of the road we had travelled, whirling away and away, like the blown tail of a kite trailed over mountain and foothill.

"The people at Millau told me I should get up to St. Flour all right, in spite of the fall of snow," said the chauffeur, his eyes on the great white waves that piled themselves against a blue-white sky, "but I begin to think there 's trouble before us, and I don't know whether I ought to have persisted in bringing you."

"Persisted!" I echoed, defending him against himself. "Why, do you suppose wild horses would have dragged

Lady Turnour in any other direction, now that she 's actually invited to be the guest of a marquis in a real live castle?"

"A railway train could very well have dragged her in the same direction and got her to the castle as soon, if not a good deal sooner than she 's likely to get in this car, if we have to fight snow. I proposed this way originally because I wanted you to see the Gorge of the Tarn, and because I thought that you 'd like Clermont-Ferrand, and the road there. It was to be *your* adventure, you know, and I shall feel a brute if I let you in for a worse one than I bargained for. Even this morning it was n't too late. I could have hinted at horrors, and they would have gone by rail like lambs, taking you with them."

"Lady Turnour can do nothing like a lamb," I contradicted him. "I should never have forgiven you for sending me away from — the car. Besides, Lady Turnour wants to teuf-teuf up to the château in her sixty-horse-power Aigle, and make an impression on the aristocracy."

"Well, we must hope for the best now," said he. "But look, the snow 's an inch thick by the roadside even at this level, so I don't know what we may n't be in for, between here and St. Flour, which is much higher — the highest point we shall have to pass in getting to the Château de Roquemartine, a few miles out of Clermont-Ferrand."

"You think we may get stuck?"

"It 's possible."

"Well, that *would* be an adventure. You know I love adventures."

"But I know the Turnours don't. And if ——" He did n't finish his sentence.

Higher we mounted, until half France seemed to lie spread out before us, and a solitary sign-post with "Paris-Perpignans" suggested unbelievable distances. The Aigle glided up gradients like the side of a somewhat toppling house, and scarcely needed to change speed, so well did she like the rarefied mountain air. I liked it too, though I had to be thankful for the plaid; and above all I liked the wild loneliness of the Causse, which was unlike anything I ever saw or imagined. The savage monotony of the heights was broken just often enough by oases of pine wood; and the plains on which we looked down were blistered with conical hills, crowned by ancient castles which would have rejoiced the hearts of mediæval painters, as they did mine. Severac-le-Château, perched on its naked pinnacle of rock, was best of all, as we saw it from our bird's-eye view, and then again, almost startlingly impressive when we had somehow whirled down below it, to pass under its old huddled town, before we flew up once more to higher and whiter levels.

Never had the car gone better; but Lady Turnour had objected to the early start which the chauffeur wanted, and the sun was nearly overhead when many a huge shoulder of glittering marble still walled us away from our journey's end. The cold was the pitiless cold of northern midwinter, and I remembered with a shiver that Millau and Clermont-Ferrand were separated from one another by nearly two hundred and fifty kilometres of such mountain roads as these. Oh yes, it was an experience, a splendid, dazzling experience; nevertheless, my cowardly

thoughts would turn, sunflower-like, toward warmth; warm rooms, even stuffy rooms, without a single window open, fires crackling, and hot things to drink. Still, I would n't admit that I was cold, and stiffened my muscles to prevent a shudder when my brother asked me cheerfully if I would enjoy a visit to the Gouffre de Padirac, close by.

A "gouffre" on such a day! Not all the splendours of the posters which I had often seen and admired, could thrill me to a desire for the expedition; but I tried to cover my real feelings with the excuse that it must now be too late to make even a small détour. Mr. Jack Dane laughed, and replied that he had no intention of making it; he had only wanted to test my pluck. "I believe you 'd pretend to be delighted if I told you we had plenty of time, and must n't miss going," said he. "But don't be frightened; this is n't a Gouffre de Padirac day, though it really is a great pity to pass it by. What do you say to lunch instead?"

And we rolled through a magnificent mediæval gateway into the ancient and unpronounceable town of Marvejols.

Before he had time to make the same suggestion to his more important passengers, it came hastily from within the glass cage. So we stopped at an inn which proudly named itself an hotel; and chauffeur and maid were entertained in a kitchen destitute of air and full of clamour. Nevertheless, it seemed a snug haven to us, and never was any soup better than the soup of "Marvels," as Sir Samuel and Lady Turnour called the place.

The word was "push on," however, for we had still

the worst before us, and a long way to go. The Quality had promised to finish its luncheon in an hour; and well before the time was up, we two Worms were out in the cold, each engaged in fulfilling its own mission. I was arranging rugs; the chauffeur was pouring some libation from a long-nosed tin upon the altar of his goddess when our master appeared, wearing such an "I have n't stolen the cream or eaten the canary" expression that we knew at once something new was in the wind.

He coughed, and floundered into explanations. "The waiter, who can speak some English, has been frightening her ladyship," said he. "After the day before yesterday she 's grown a bit timid, and to hear that the cold she has suffered from is nothing to what she may have to experience higher up, and later in the day, as the sun gets down behind the mountains, has put her off motoring. It seems we can go on from here by train to Clermont-Ferrand and that 's what she wants to do. I hate deserting the car, but after all, this *is* an expedition of pleasure, and if her ladyship has a preference, why should n't it be gratified?"

"Quite so, sir," responded the chauffeur, his face a blank.

"My first thought on making up my mind to the train was to have the car shipped at the same time," went on Sir Samuel, "but it seems that can't be done. There 's lots of red tape about such things, and the motor might have to wait days on end here at Marvels, before getting off, to say nothing of how long she might be on the way. Whereas, I 've been calculating, if you start now and go as quick as you can, you ought to be at the

château (he pronounced it "chattoe") before us. Our train does n't leave for more than an hour, and it 's a very slow one. Still, it will be warm, and we have cards and Tauchnitz novels. Then, you know, you can unload the luggage at the château and run back to the railway station at Clermont-Ferrand, see to having our big boxes sent out (they 'll be there waiting for us) and meet our train. What do you think of the plan?"

"It ought to do very well — if I 'm not delayed on the road by snow."

"Do you expect to be?"

"I hope not. But it 's possible."

"Well, her ladyship has made up her mind, and we must risk it. I 'll trust you to get out of any scrape."

The chauffeur smiled. "I 'll try not to get into one," he said. "And I 'd better be off — unless you have further instructions?"

"Only the receipt for the luggage. Here it is," said Sir Samuel. "And here are the keys for you, Elise. Her ladyship wants you to have everything unpacked by the time she arrives. Oh — and the rugs! We shall need them in the train."

"Is n't mademoiselle going with you?" asked my brother, showing surprise at last.

"No. Her mistress thinks it would be better for her to have everything ready for us at the 'chattoe.' You see, it will be almost dinner-time when we get there."

"But, sir, if the car's delayed ——"

"Well," cut in Sir Samuel, "we must chance it, I 'm afraid. The fact is, her ladyship is in such a nervous state that I don't care to put any more doubts into her

head. She 's made up her mind what she wants, and we 'd better let it go at that."

If I 'd been near enough to my brother I should have stamped on his foot, or seized some other forcible method of suggesting that he should kindly hold his tongue. As it was, my only hope lay in an imploring look, which he did not catch. However, in pity for Sir Samuel he said no more; and before we were three minutes older, if her ladyship had yearned to have me back, it would have been too late. We were off together, and another day had been given to us for ours.

The chauffeur proposed that I should sit inside the car; but I had regained all my courage in the hot inn-kitchen. I was not cold, and did n't feel as if I should ever be cold again.

The road mounted almost continuously. Sometimes, as we looked ahead, it seemed to have been broken off short just in front of the car, by some dreadful earth convulsion; but it always turned out to be only a sudden dip down, or a sharp turn like the curve of an apple-paring. At last we had reached the highest peak of the Roof of France — a sloping, snow-covered roof; but steep as was the slant, very little of the snow appeared to have slipped off.

The Cévennes on our right loomed near and bleak; the Auvergne stretched endlessly before us, and the virgin snow, pure as edelweiss, was darkened in the misty distance by patches of shadow, purple-blue, like beds of early violets.

At first but a thin white sheet was spread over our road, but soon the lace-like fabric was exchanged for a fleecy

blanket, then a thick quilt of down, and the motor began to pant. The winds seemed to come from all ways at once, shrieking like witches, and flinging their splinters of ice, fine and small as broken needles, against our cheeks. Still I would not go inside. I could not bear to be warm and comfortable while Jack faced the cold alone. I knew his fingers must be stiff, though he would n't confess to any suffering, and I wished that I knew how to drive the car, so that we might have taken turns, sitting with our hands in our pockets.

In the deepening snow we moved slowly, the wheels slipping now and then, unable to grip. Then, on a steep incline, there came a report like a revolver shot. But it did n't frighten me now. I knew it meant a collapsed tyre, not a concealed murderer; but there could n't have been a much worse place for "jacking up." Nevertheless, it 's an ill tyre that blows up for its own good alone, and the forty minutes out of a waning afternoon made the chauffeur's cold hands hot and the hot engine cold.

Starting on again, we had ten miles of desolation, then a tiny hamlet which seemed only to emphasize that desolation; again another ten-mile stretch of desert, and another hamlet; here and there a glimpse of the railway-line, like a great black snake, lost in the snow; now and then the gilded picture of an ancient town, crowning some tall crag that stood up from the flat plain below like a giant bottle. And there was one thrilling view of a high viaduct, flinging a spider's web of glittering steel across a vast and shadowy ravine. "Garabit!" said the chauffeur, as he saw it; and I remembered that this road was not

new for him. He did not talk much. Was he thinking of the companion who perhaps had sat beside him before? I wondered. Was it because he thought continually of her that he looked at me wistfully sometimes, often in silence, wishing me away, maybe, and the woman who had spoilt his life by his side again for good or ill?

Suddenly we plunged into a deep snow-bank which deceitfully levelled a dip in the road, and the car stopped, trembling like a horse caught by the hind leg while in full gallop.

On went the first speed, most powerful of all, but not powerful enough to fight through snow nearly up to the hubs. The Aigle was prisoned like a rat in a trap, and could neither go back nor forward.

"Well?" I questioned, half laughing, half frightened, at this fulfilment of the morning's prophecy.

"Sit still, and I 'll try to push her through," said Jack jumping out into the deep snow. "It 's only a drift in a hollow, you see; and we should have got by the worst, just up there at St. Flour."

I looked where his nod indicated, and saw a town as dark and seemingly as old as the rock out of which it grew, climbing a conical hill, to dominate all the wide, white reaches above which it stood, like an armoured sentinel on a watch-tower. As I gazed, struck with admiration, which for an instant made me forget our plight, he began to push. The car, surprised at his strength and determination, half decided to move, then changed her mind and refused to budge. In a second, before he could guess what I meant to do, I had flashed out of my seat into the snow, and was wading in his tracks to help

him when he snatched me up — a hand on either side of my waist — and swung me back into my place again.

"Little wretch!" he exclaimed. "How dare you disobey me?"

Then I was vexed, for it was ignominious to be treated as a child, when I had wanted to aid him like a comrade.

"You are very unkind — very rude," I said. "You would n't dare to do that, or speak like that to *Her*."

He laughed loudly. "What — have n't you forgotten 'Her?'" (As if I ever could!) "Well, I may tell you, it 's just because I did dare to 'speak like that' to a woman, that I 'm a chauffeur stuck in the snow with another man's car, and the ——"

"The rest is another epithet which concerns me, I suppose," I remarked with dignity, though suddenly I felt the chill of the icy air far, far more cruelly than I had felt it yet. I was so cold, in this white desolation, that it seemed I must die soon. And it would n't matter at all if I were buried under the drifts, to be found in the late spring with violets growing out of the places where my eyes once had been.

"Yes," said he, in that cool way he has, which can be as irritating as a chilblain. "It was an epithet concerning you, but luckily for me I stopped to think before I spoke — an accomplishment I 'm only just beginning to learn."

I swallowed something much harder and bigger than a cannon ball, and said nothing.

"Of course you 're covered with snow up to your knees, foolish child!" He was glaring ferociously at me.

"It does n't matter."

"It does matter most infernally. Don't you know that you make no more than a featherweight of difference to the car?"

"I feel as if I weighed a thousand pounds, now."

"It 's that snow!"

"No. It 's you. Your crossness. I *can't* have people cross to me, on lonely mountains, just when I 'm trying to help them."

His glare of rage turned to a stare of surprise. "Cross? Do you think I was cross to you?"

"Yes. And you just stopped in time, or you would have been worse."

"Oh, I see," he said. "You thought that the 'epithet' was going to be invidious, did you?"

"Naturally."

"Well, it was n't. I — no, I *won't* say it! That would be the last folly. But — I was n't going to be cross. I can't have you think that, whatever happens. Now sit still and be good, while I push again."

I weighed no more than half the thousand pounds now, and the cannon ball had dissolved like a chocolate cream; but the car stood like a rock, fixed, immutable.

"There ought to be half a dozen of me," said the chauffeur. "Look here, little pal, there 's nothing else for it; I must trudge off to St. Flour and collect the missing five. Are you afraid to be left here alone?"

Of course I said no; but when he had disappeared, walking very fast, I thought of a large variety of horrors that might happen; almost everything, in fact, from an earthquake to a mad bull. As the sun leaned far down toward the west, the level red light lay like pools of blood

in the snow-hollows, and the shadows "came alive," as they used when I was a child lying awake, alone, watching the play of the fire on wall and ceiling.

Long minutes passed, and at last I could sit still no longer. Gaily risking my brother's displeasure, now I knew that he was n't "cross," I slipped out into the snow again, opened the car door, stood in the doorway, hanging on with one hand, and after much manœuvring extricated the tea-basket from among spare tyres and luggage on the roof. Then, swinging it down, planted it inside the car, opened it, and scooped up a kettleful of snow. As soon as the big white lump had melted over a rose and azure flame of alcohol, I added more snow, and still more, until the kettle was filled with water. By the time I had warmed and dried my feet on the automatic heater under the floor, the water bubbled; and as jets of steam began to pour from the spout I saw six figures approaching, dark as if they had been cut out in black velvet against the snow.

"Tea for seven!" I said to myself; but the kettle was large, if the cups were few.

It took half an hour to dig the car out, and push her up from the hollow where the snow lay thickest. When she stood only a foot deep, she consented readily to move. We bade good-bye to the five men, for whom we had emptied our not-too-well filled pockets, and forged, bumbling, past St. Flour. It was a great strain for a heavy car, and the chauffeur only said, "I thought so!" when a chain snapped five or six miles farther on.

"What a good thing Lady Turnour is n't here!" said I, as he doctored the wounded Aigle.

"It took half an hour to dig the car out, and push her up from the hollow where the snow lay thickest"

Not to be
taken away

"Lots of girls would be in a blue funk," said he. "I could shake that beastly woman for not taking you with her."

"Oh!" I exclaimed. "When I 'm not doing you *any* harm!"

He glanced up from his work, and then, as if on an irresistible impulse, left the chain to come and stand beside me, as I sat wrapped up in his gift "for a good girl."

He gazed at me for a moment without speaking, and I wonderingly returned the gaze, not knowing what was to follow.

The moon had come sailing up like a great silver ship, over the snow billows, and gleamed against a sky which was still a garden of full-blown roses not yet faded, though sunset was long over. The soft, pure light shone on his dark face, cutting it out clearly, and he had never looked so handsome.

"You don't mean to do *me* any harm, do you?" he said.

"I could n't if I would, and would n't if I could," I answered in surprise.

"Yet you *do* me harm."

"You 're joking!"

"I never was further from joking in my life. You do me harm because you make me wish for something I can't have, something it 's a constant fight with me, ever since we 've been thrown together, not to wish for, not to think of. Yet you say I 'm cross! Now, do you know what I mean, and will you help me a little to remain your faithful brother, instead of tempting me — tempting me, however unconsciously, to — to wish — for — for — what a fool I am! I 'm going to finish my mending."

I sat perfectly still, with my mouth open, feeling as if it were *my* chain, not the car's, which had broken!

Of course if it had n't been for all his talk of *Her*, I should have known, or thought that I knew, well enough what he meant. But how could I take his strange words and stammered hints for what they seemed to suggest, knowing as I did, from his own veiled confessions, that he was in love with some beautiful fiend who had ruined his career and then thrown him over!

I longed to speak, to ask him just one question, but I dared not. No words would come; and perhaps if they had, I should have regretted them, for I was so sure he was not a man who would fall out of love with one woman to tumble into love for another, that I did n't know what to make of him; but the thought which his words shot into my mind, swift and keen, and then tore away again, showed me very well what to make of myself.

If I had n't quite known before, I knew suddenly, all in a minute, that I was in love, oh, but humiliatingly deep in love, with the chauffeur! It seemed to me that no nice, well-regulated girl could ever have let herself go tobogganing down such a steep hill, splash into such a sea of love, unless the man were at the bottom in a boat, holding out his arms to catch her as she fell. But the chauffeur had n't the slightest intention of holding out his arms to the poor little motor maid. He went on mending the chain, and when he got into the car beside me again he began to talk about the weather.

CHAPTER XXV

IT WAS ten o'clock when we came into Clermont-Ferrand, which looked a beautiful old place in the moonlight, with the great, white Puy de Dome floating half way up the sky, like a marble dream-palace.

I trembled for our reception at the château, for everything would be our fault, from the snow on the mountains to Lady Turnour's lack of a dinner dress; and the consciousness of our innocence would be our sole comfort. Not for an instant did we believe that it would help our case to stop at the railway station and arrange for the big luggage to be sent the first thing in the morning; nevertheless, we satisfied our consciences by doing it, though we were so hungry that everything uneatable seemed irrelevant.

A young woman in a book, who had just pried into the depths of her soul, and discovered there a desperate love, would have loathed the thought of food; but evidently I am unworthy to be a heroine, for my imagination called up visions of soup and steak; and because it seemed so extremely important to be hungry, I could quite well put off being unhappy until to-morrow.

It is only three miles from Clermont-Ferrand to the Château de Roquemartine, and we came to it easily, without inquiries, Jack having carefully studied the road map with Sir Samuel. He had only to stop at the porter's lodge

to make sure we were right, and then to teuf-teuf up a long, straight avenue, sounding our musical siren as an announcement of our arrival. It was only when I saw the fine old mansion on a terraced plateau, its creamy stone white as pearl in the moonlight, its rows upon rows of windows ablaze, that I remembered my position disagreeably. I was going to stay at this charming place, as a servant, not as a member of the house-party. I would have to eat in the servants' hall — I, Lys d'Angely, whose family had been one of the proudest in France. Why, the name de Roquemartine was as nothing beside ours. It had not even been invented when ours was already old. What would my father say if he could see his daughter arriving thus at a house which would have been too much honoured by a visit from him? I was suddenly ashamed. My boasted sense of humour, about which I am usually such a Pharisee, sulked in a corner and refused to come out to my rescue, though I called upon it. Funny it might be to eat in the kitchens of inns, but I could not feel that it was funny to be relegated to the servants' brigade in the private house of a countryman of my father.

What queerly complicated creatures we little human animals are! An avalanche of love had n't destroyed my hunger. A knife-thrust in my vanity killed it in an instant; and I can't believe this was simply because I 'm female. I should n't be surprised if a man might feel exactly the same — or more so.

"Oh, dear!" I sighed. "It 's going to be horrid here. But" — with a stab of remorse for my self-absorption — "it 's just as bad for you as for me. *You* don't need to stay in the house, though. You 're a man, and free.

Don't stop for my sake. I won't have it! Please live in an inn. There 's sure to be one near by."

"I 'm not going to look for it," said my brother. "You need n't worry about me. I 've got pretty callous. I shall have quarters for nothing here — you 're always preaching economy."

But I would n't be convinced. "Pooh! You 're only saying that, so that I won't think you 're sacrificing yourself for me. Do you know anything about the Roquemartines?"

"A little."

"Good gracious, I hope you 've never met them?"

"I believe I lunched here with them once three years ago, with a motoring friend of theirs."

He stated this fact so quietly, that, if I had n't begun to know him and his ways, I might have supposed him indifferent to the situation; but — I can hardly say why — I did n't suppose it. I supposed just the contrary; and I respected him, and his calmness, twenty times more than before, if that were possible. Besides, I would have loved him twenty times more, only that was impossible. How much stronger and better he was than I — I, who blurted out my every feeling! I, a stranger, felt the position almost too hateful for endurance, simply because it was ruffling to my vanity. He, an acquaintance of these people, who had been their guest, resigned himself to herding with their servants, because — yes, I knew it! — because he would not let me bear annoyances alone.

"You can't, you *shan't* stop in the house!" I gasped. "Leave me and the luggage. Drive the car to the nearest village."

"I don't *want* to leave you. Can't you understand that?" he said. "I 'm not sacrificing myself."

We were at the door. We had been heard. If I had suddenly been endowed with the eloquence of Demosthenes, the gift would have come too late. The door was thrown open, not by servants, but by a merry, curious crowd of ladies and gentlemen, anxious to see the arrival of the belated, no doubt much talked of, automobile. Light streamed out from a great hall, which seemed, at first glance, to be half full of people in evening dress, girls and young men, gay and laughing. Everybody was talking at the same time, chattering both English and French, nobody listening to anybody else, all intent on having a glimpse of the car. I believe they were disappointed not to see it battered by some accident; sensations are so dear to the hearts of idle ones.

Sir Samuel Turnour came out, with two young men and a couple of girls, while Lady Turnour, afraid of the cold, remained on the threshold in a group of other women among whom she was violently conspicuous by the blazing of her jewels. The others were all in dinner dress, with very few jewels. She had attempted to atone for her blouse and short skirt by putting on all her diamonds and a rope or two of pearls. Poor woman! I knew her capable of much. I had not supposed her capable of this.

Instinct told me that one of the young men with Sir Samuel was the Marquis de Roquemartine, and I trembled with physical dread, as if under a lifted lash, of his greeting to Jack. But the *pince-nez* over prominent, near-sighted eyes, gave me hope that my chauffeur might be spared an unpleasant ordeal. Joy! the Marquis did not appear to

recognize him, and neither did the Marquise, if she were one of the young women who had run out to the car. Maybe, if he could escape recognition now, he might escape altogether. Once swept away among the flotsam and jetsam below stairs, he would be both out of sight and out of mind. I did not care about myself now, only for him, and I was beginning to cheer up a little, when I noticed that the other young man was gazing at the chauffeur very intently.

His flushed face, and small fair moustache, his light eyes and hair, looked as English as the Marquis' short, pointed chestnut beard and sleek hair *en brosse*, looked French. "Bertie!" I said to myself, flashing a glance at him from under my veil.

Bertie, if Bertie it was, did not speak. He simply stared, mechanically pulling an end of his tiny moustache, while Sir Samuel talked. But he was so much interested in his stepfather's chauffeur that when the really very pretty girl near him spoke, over his shoulder, he did not hear.

"Well, we began to think you 'd tumbled over a precipice!" exclaimed Sir Samuel, with the jovial loudness that comes to men of his age from good champagne or the rich red wines of Southern France.

Jack explained. The fair-haired young man let him finish in peace, and then said, slowly, "Is n't your name Dane?"

"It is," replied my brother.

"Thought I knew your face," went on the other. "So you 've taken to chauffeuring as a last resort — what?"

He was intended by Providence to be good looking, but so snobbish was his expression as he spoke, so cruelly

sarcastic his voice, that he became hideous in my eyes. A bleached skull grinning over a tall collar could not have seemed more repulsive than the pink, healthy features of that young man with his single eye-glass and his sneer.

Jack paid no more attention than if he had not heard, but the slight stiffening of his face and raising of his eyebrows as he turned to Sir Samuel, made him look supremely proud and distinguished, incomparably more a gentleman in his dusty leather livery, than Bertie in his well-cut evening clothes.

"I called at the railway station, and the luggage will be here before eight to-morrow morning," he said, quietly.

"All right, all right," replied Sir Samuel, slow to understand what was going on, but uncomfortable between the two young men. "I did n't know that you were acquainted with my stepson, Dane."

"It was scarcely an acquaintance, sir," said the chauffeur. "And I was n't aware that Mr. Stokes was your stepson."

"If you had been, you jolly well would n't have taken the engagement — what?" remarked Bertie, with a hateful laugh.

This time Jack condescended to look at him; from the head down, from the feet up. "Really," he said, after an instant's reflection, "it would n't have been fair to Sir Samuel to feel a prejudice on account of the relationship. If one of the servants would kindly show me the garage ——"

CHAPTER XXVI

IF IT had n't been for the hope of seeing Jack again, I should have said that I wanted nothing to eat, when I was asked; but I thought that he might come to the servants' dining-room, if only because he would expect to find me there; and I was right: he came.

"What an imbroglio!" I whispered, as he joined me at the table, where hot soup and cold chicken were set forth.

"Not at all," said he, cheerfully. "Things are better for me than I thought. Roquemartine did n't recognize me, I 'm sure, for if he had, he would have said so. He is n't a snob. But I rather hoped he would have forgotten. I came as a stranger, brought by a friend of his and mine, was here only for a meal (we were motoring then, too) —and it 's three years ago."

"But the marquise?"

"She 's a bran new one. I fancied I 'd heard that the wife died. This one has the air of a bride, and I should say she 's an American."

"Yes. She is. The maid who showed me my room told me. The other girl who came out of doors, is her sister. They 're fearfully rich, it seems, and that young brute wants to marry her."

"Thank you for the descriptive adjective, my little partizan, but you 're troubling yourself for me more than

you need. I don't mind, really. It 's all in a life-time, and I knew when I went in for this business, that I should have to take the rough with the smooth. I was down on my luck, and glad to get anything. What I have got is honest, and something that I know I can do well — something I enjoy, too; and I 'm not going to let a vulgar young snob like that make me ashamed of myself, when I 've nothing to be ashamed of."

"You ought to be proud of yourself, not ashamed!" I cried to him, trying to keep my eyes cold.

"Heaven knows there 's little enough to be proud of. You 'd see that, if I bored you with my history —and perhaps I will some day. But anyhow, I 've nothing which I need to hide."

"As if I did n't know that! But Bertie hates you."

"I don't much blame him for that. In a way, the position in which we stand to each other is a kind of poetical justice. I don't blame myself, either, for I always did loathe a cad and Stokes is a cad par excellence. He visited, more or less on suffrance, at two or three houses where I used to go a good deal, in my palmy days. How he got asked, originally, I don't exactly know, for the people were n't a bit his sort; but money does a lot for a man in these days; and once in, he was n't easy to get rid of. He had a crawling way with any one he hoped to squeeze any advantage out of ——"

"I suppose he crawled to you then," I broke in.

"He did try it on, a bit, because I knew people he wanted to know; but it did n't work. I rather put myself out to be rude to him, for I resented a fellow like that worming himself into places where he had no earthly

right to be — no right of brains, or heart, or breeding. I must admit, now I think of it, that he has several scores to wipe off; and judging from the way he begins, he will wipe hard. Let him!"

"No, no," I protested. "You must n't let him. It 's too much. You will have to tell Sir Samuel that he must find a new chauffeur at once. It hurts me like a blow to think of such a creature humiliating you. I could n't see it done."

He looked at me very kindly, with quite all a brother's tenderness. "My dear little pal," he said, "you won't have to see it."

"You mean — you will go?" Of course, I wanted him to take my advice, or I would n't have offered it, yet it gave me a heartache to think he was ready to take it so easily.

"I mean that I 'm not the man to let myself be humiliated by a Bertie Stokes. Possibly he may persuade his stepfather to sack me, but I don't think he 'll succeed in doing that, even if he tries. Sir Samuel, I suppose, has given him every thing he has; sent him to Oxford (I know he was there, and scraped through by the skin of his teeth), and allows him thousands enough to mix with a set where he does n't belong; but though the old boy is weak in some ways, he has a strong sense of justice, and where he likes he is loyal. I think he does like me, and I don't believe he 'd discharge me to please his stepson. Not only that, I should be surprised if the promising Bertie wanted me discharged. It would be more in his line to want me kept on, so that he might take it out of me."

I shuddered; but Jack smiled, showing his white teeth almost merrily. "You may see some fun," he said, "but it shan't be death to the frogs; not so bad as that. And I shall have you to be kind to me."

"Kind to you!" I echoed, rather tremulously. (If he only knew how kind I should like to be!) "Yes, I will be kind. But I can't do anything to make up for what you 'll have to bear. You had better go."

"Perhaps I would, if I could take you away with me, but that can't be. And, no, even in that case, I should prefer to stick it out. I should n't like to let that young bounder drive me from a place, whether I wanted to go or not. And do you think I would clear out, and leave him to worry you?"

"He can't," I said.

"I wish I were sure of that. When the beast sees you without your veil — oh, hang it, you must n't let him come near you, you know."

"He is n't likely to take the slightest notice of his step-father's wife 's maid," said I, "especially as he 's dying to marry the American heiress here."

"Anyhow, be careful."

"I shan't look at him if I can help it. And we shall be gone before long. I believe the Turnours' invitation, which their Bertie was bribed to ask for, is only for two or three days. How you *must* have been feeling when you were told to drive here! But you showed nothing."

"I had a qualm or two when I was sure of the place; but then it was over. It 's far worse for you than for me. And I told you I 've been learning from you a lesson of cheerfulness. I was merely a Stoic before."

"It 's nothing for me, comparatively," I said, and by this time, I was quite sincere; but I did n't know then what the next twenty-four hours were to bring.

We were not left alone for long, but in ten minutes we had had our talk out, while we played at eating the meal we had looked forward to with eagerness before our appetites were crowded into the background. A fat *sous chef* flitted about; maids and valets glanced in; nevertheless, we found time for a heart-warming hand pressure before we parted for the night. Altogether, I had not had more than fifteen minutes in the dining-room; yet when I left I felt a hundred times braver and more cheerful.

Already I had been to my mistress's quarters. The maid who took charge of me on my arrival showed me that room before she showed me mine, and explained the way from one to the other. My "bump of locality" was tested, however, in getting back to her ladyship's part of the house, for the castle has its intricacies.

The word "château," in France, covers a multitude of comfortable, unpretentious family mansions, as I had not to find out now, for the first time; and the dwelling of the Roquemartines, though a fine old house of the seventeenth century, is no more imposing, under its high, slate roof, than many another. It is Lady Turnour's first experience, though, as a visitor in the "mansions of the great," and when I had been briskly unpacking for half an hour or so, she came in, somewhat subdued by her new emotions. I think that she was rather glad to see a familiar face, to have someone to talk to of whom she did not feel in awe, with whom she need not be afraid of making some

mistake; and she seemed quite human to me, for the first time.

Never had I seen her in such an expansive mood, not even when she gave me the blouse. Instead of the cross words I had braced myself to expect, she was almost friendly. She had felt a fool, she said, not being able to dress for dinner, but then no one else could touch her, for jewels; and did n't every one just stare, at the table, though, of course, she had n't put on her tiara, as that would n't have been suitable with a blouse and short skirt! Sir Samuel's stepson had been quite nasty and superior about the jewels, when he got at her, afterward, and she believed would have been rude if he 'd dared, but luckily he did n't know her well enough for that; and he 'd better be careful how far he went, or he 'd find things very different from what they 'd been with him, since his mother married Sir Samuel. As if men knew when women ought to wear their jewels, and when not! But he was green with jealousy of the things his stepfather had given her; wanted everything himself.

She went on to describe the other members of the house party, and mouthed their titles with delight, though she had only her own maid to impress. Everyone had a title, it seemed, except Bertie, and the American girl he wanted to marry, Miss Nelson, a sister of the young marquise. Some of the titles were very high ones, too. There were princes and princesses, and dukes and duchesses all over the place, mostly French and Italian, though one of the duchesses was American, like the marquise and her sister.

"Not the Duchesse de Melun!" I exclaimed, before I stopped to think.

"Yes, that 's the name," said her ladyship, twisting round to look up at me, as I wound her back hair in curling-pins. "What do you know about her?"

How I wished that I knew nothing — and that I had n't spoken!

The name had popped out, because the Duchesse de Melun is the only American-born duchess of my acquaintance, and because I was hoping very hard that the duchess of the Château de Roquemartine might *not* be the Duchesse de Melun. What bad luck that the Roquemartines had selected that particular duchess for this particular house party, when they must know plenty, and could just as well have chosen another specimen!

"I have heard her name," I admitted, primly. And so I had, too often. "A friend of mine was — was with her, once."

"As her maid?"

"Not exactly."

"Another sort of servant, I suppose?"

As her ladyship stated this as a fact, rather than asked it as a question, I ventured to refrain from answering. Fortunately she did n't notice the omission, as her thoughts had jumped to another subject. But mine were not so readily displaced. They remained fastened to the Duchesse de Melun; and while Lady Turnour talked, I was wondering whether I could successfully contrive to keep out of the duchess's way. She is quite intimate with Cousin Catherine; and I told myself that she was pretty sure already to have heard the truth about my

disappearance. Or, if even with her friends, Cousin Catherine clings to conventionalities, and pretends that I 'm visiting somewhere by her consent, people are almost certain to scent a mystery, for mysteries are popular. "If that duchess woman sees me, she 'll write to Cousin Catherine at once," I thought. "Or I would n't put it *past* her to telegraph!"

("Put it past" is an expression of Cousin Catherine's own, which I always disliked; but it came in handy now.)

I tried to console myself, though, by reflecting that, if I were careful, I ought to be able to avoid the duchess. The ways of great ladies and little maids lie far apart in grand houses and ——

"There is going to be a servants' ball to-morrow night," announced Lady Turnour, while my thoughts struggled out of the slough of despond. "And I want you to be the best dressed one there, for *my* credit. We 're all going to look on, and some of the young gentlemen may dance. The marquise and Miss Nelson say they mean to, too, but I should think they are joking. *I* may not be a French princess nor yet a marquise, but I *am* an English lady, and I must say I should n't care to dance with my cook, or my chauffeur."

Her chauffeur would be at one with her there! But I could think of nothing save myself in this crisis. "Oh, miladi, I *can't* go to a servants' ball!" I exclaimed.

She bridled. "Why not, I should like to know? Do you consider yourself above it?"

"It is n't that," I faltered. (And it was n't; it was that duchess!) "But — but ——" I searched for an excuse. "I have n't anything to wear."

"I will see to that," said my mistress, with relentless generosity. "I intend to give you a dress, and as you have next to nothing to do to-morrow, you can alter it in time. If you had any gratitude in you, Elise, you 'd be out of yourself with joy at the idea."

"Oh, I am out of myself, miladi," I moaned.

"Well, you might say 'Thank your ladyship,' then."

I said it.

"When you have unpacked the big luggage in the morning, I will give you the dress. I have decided on it already. Sir Samuel does n't like it on me, so I don't mind parting with it; but it 's very handsome, and cost me a great deal of money when I was getting my trousseau. It is scarlet satin trimmed with green beetle-wing passementerie, and gold fringe."

My one comfort, as I gasped out spasmodic thanks, was this: I would look such a vulgar horror in the scarlet satin trimmed with green beetle-wings and gold fringe, that the Duchesse de Melun might fail to recognize Lys d'Angely.

CHAPTER XXVII

I DUSTED and shook out every cell in my brain, during the night, in the hope of finding any inspiration which might save me from the servants' ball; but I could think of nothing, except that I might suddenly come down with a contagious disease. The objection to this scheme was that a doctor would no doubt be sent for, and would read my secret in my lack of temperature.

When morning came, I was sullenly resigned to the worst. "Kismet!" said I, as I unfolded her ladyship's dresses, and was blinded by the glare of the scarlet satin.

"Try it on," commanded my mistress. "I want to get an idea how you will look."

Naturally, the red thing was a Directoire thing; and putting it on over my snug little black frock, I was like a cricket crawling into an empty lobster-shell. But to my surprise and annoyance, the lobster-shell was actually becoming to the cricket.

I did n't want to look nice and be a credit to Lady Turnour. I wanted to look a fright, and did n't care if I were a disgrace to her. But the startling scarlet satin was Liberty satin, and therefore had a sheen, and a soft way of folding that redeemed it somewhat. Its bright poppy colour, its emerald beetle-wings shading to gold, and its glittering fringes that waved like a wheat-field stirred by

a breeze, all gave a bizarre sort of "value," as artists say, to my pale yellow hair and dark eyes. I could n't help seeing that the dreadful dress made my skin pearly white; and I was afraid that, when I had altered the thing, instead of looking like a frump, I should only present the appearance of a rather fast little actress. I should be looked at in my scarlet abomination. People would stare, and smile. The Duchesse de Melun would say to the Marquise de Roquemartine: "Who is that young person? She looks exactly like someone I know — that little Lys d'Angely the millionaire-man, Charretier, is so silly about."

"You see, you can alter it very easily," said Lady Turnour.

"Yes, miladi."

"Have you got any dancing slippers?"

"No — that is — I don't know ——"

"Don't be stupid. I will give you ten francs to buy yourself a pair of red stockings and red slippers to match. The stockings need n't be silk. They won't show much. Dane can take you in the car to Clermont-Ferrand this afternoon. I want you to be all right, from head to feet — different from any of the other maids."

I did n't doubt that I would be different — very different.

Tap, tap, a knock at the door.

"Ontray!" cried her ladyship.

The door opened. Mr. Herbert Stokes stood on the threshold.

"I say, Lady T ——" be began, when he saw the scarlet vision, and stopped.

"What is it?" inquired the wife of his stepfather — rather a complicated relation.

"I — er — wanted ——" drawled Bertie. "But it does n't matter. Another time."

"You need n't mind *her*," said Lady Turnour, with a nod toward me. "It 's only my maid. I 'm giving her a dress for the servants' ball to-night."

Bertie gave vent to the ghost of a whistle, below his breath. He looked at me, twisting the end of his small fair moustache, as he had looked at Jack Dane last night; and though his expression was different, I liked it no better.

"Thought it was a new guest," said he.

"I suppose you did n't take her for a lady, did you?" my mistress was curious to know. "You pride yourself on your discrimination, your stepfather says."

"There 's nothing the matter with my discrimination," replied the young man, smiling. But his smile was not for her ladyship. It was for me; and it was meant to be a piquant little secret between us two.

How well I remembered asking the chauffeur, "*Could* you know a Bertie?" And how he answered that he had known one, and consequently did n't want to know another. Here was the same Bertie; and now that I too knew him, I thought I would prefer to know another, rather than know more of him. Yet he was good-looking, almost handsome. He had short, curly light hair, eyes as blue as turquoises, seen by daylight, full red lips under the little moustache, a white forehead, a dimple in the chin, and a very good figure. He had also an educated, perhaps too well educated, voice, which tried to advertise that it had been made at Oxford; and he had hands as carefully kept as a pretty woman's, with manicured, filbert-shaped nails.

"You 're making her jolly smart," he went on. "She 'll do you credit."

" I want she should," retorted her ladyship, gratified and ungrammatical.

"She must give me a dance — what?" condescended the gilded youth. "Does she speak English?"

"Yes. So you 'd better be careful what you say before her."

Bertie telegraphed another smile to me. I looked at the faded damask curtains; at the mantelpiece with its gilded clock and two side-pieces, Louis Seize at his worst, considered good enough for a bedroom; at the drapings of the enormous bed; at the portière covering the door of Sir Samuel's dressing-room; at the kaleidoscopic claret-and-blue figures on the carpet; in fact, at everything within reach of my eyes except Mr. Herbert Stokes.

"I 've nothing to say that she can't hear," said he, virtuously. "I only wanted to know if you 'd like to see the gardens? The marquise sent me to ask. Several people who have n't been here before are goin'. It 's a lot warmer this mornin', so you won't freeze."

Lady Turnour said that she would go, and ordered me to find her hat and coat. As I turned to get them, Bertie smiled at me again, and threw me a last glance as he followed my mistress out of the room.

I begin to be afraid there is an innate vanity in me which nothing can thoroughly eradicate without tearing me up by the roots; for when I was ready to alter that red dress, instead of trying to make it look as ridiculous as possible, something forced me to do my best, to study fitness and becomingness. I do hope this is self-respect

and not vanity; but to hope that is, I fear, like believing in a thing which you know is n't true.

I worked all the morning at ensmalling the gown (if one can enlarge, why can't one ensmall ?) and by luncheon time it was finished. I had seen Jack at breakfast, but had no chance for a word with him alone, although he succeeded valiantly in keeping other chauffeurs, and valets, from making my acquaintance. As I stopped only long enough for a cup of coffee and a roll, I did n't give him too much trouble; but at luncheon it was different. Everyone was chattering about the ball in the evening (a privilege promised, it seemed, as a reward for hard work on the occasion of a real ball above stairs), and house servants and visitors alike were all so gay and good-natured that it would have been stupid to snub them. Jack saw this, and though he protected me as well as he could in an unobtrusive way, he put out no bristles.

The general excitement was contagious, and if it had n't been for the panic I was in about the duchess, I should have thrown myself wholly into the spirit of the hive, buzzing like the busiest bee in it. Even as it was, I could n't help entering into the fun of the thing, for it was fun in its queer way. Something like being on the stage of a third-rate theatre in the midst of a farce, where the actors mistake you for one of themselves, calling upon you to play your part, while you alone know that you are a leading member of the Comédie Française, just dropped in at this funny place to look on.

Here, the stage was on a much grander scale, and the play more amusing than in the couriers' dining-rooms at the hotels where I had been. At the hotels, the maids

and valets scarcely knew each other. Some were in a hurry, others were tired or in a bad humour. Here the little company had been together for days. Meals were a relaxation, a time for flirtation and gossip about their own and each other's masters and mistresses. Each servant felt the liveliest interest in the "Monsieur" or "Madame" of his or her neighbour; and the stories that were exchanged, the criticisms that were made, would have caused the hair of those *messieurs* and those *mesdames* to curl.

If I was openly approved by the gentlemen's gentlemen, Mr. Jack Dane had the undisguised admiration of the ladies' ladies; and he received their advances with tact. Dances for the evening were asked for and promised right and left, among the assemblage, always dependent upon summons from Above. It was agreed that, if a Monsieur or Madame wished to dance with you, no previous engagement was to stand, for all the castles and big houses from far and near would be emptied in honour of the ball, from drawing-rooms to servants' halls, and quality was to mingle with quantity, as on similar occasions in England, whence — the chef explained — came the fashion. It was a feature of *l'entente cordiale*, and the same agreeable understanding was to level all barriers, for the night, between high and low.

Some of the visitors' *femmes de chambres* were pretty, coquettish creatures, and I was delighted to find that they were all called by their mistresses' titles. The maid of my *bête noire* was "Duchesse"; she who pertained to our hostess was "Marquise," and I blossomed into "Miladi." The girls were looking forward to rivalling their mistresses

in *chic*, and also in the admiration of the real princes and dukes and counts; that they would have an exclusive right to the attentions of these gentlemen's understudies also seemed to be expected.

After half an hour at table in the servants' hall, there was nothing left for me to find out about the owners of the castle and their guests; but the principal interest of everyone seemed to centre upon the affair between Mr. Herbert Stokes and the heiress sister of Madame la Marquise. There were even bets among the valets as to how it was to end, and Bertie's man, who looked as if he could speak volumes if he would, was a person of importance.

All the men admired Miss Nelson extremely, but the women were divided in opinion. Her own maid, a bilious Frenchwoman, with a jealous eye, said that the American miss was *une petite chatte*, who was playing off Mr. Stokes against the Duc de Divonne, and it was a pity that the handsome young English monsieur could not be warned of her unworthiness. The duke was not handsome, and he was neither young nor rich, but — these Americans were out for titles, just as titles were out for American money. Why else had the marriage of Madame la Marquise, Miss Daisy's elder sister, made itself? Miss Daisy liked Mr. Stokes, but he could not give her a title. The duke could — *if* he would. But would he? She was rich, but there were others richer. People said that he was wary. Yet he admired Miss Daisy, it was true, and if by her flirtation with Mr. Stokes she could pique him into a proposal, she would have her triumph.

This was only one of many dramas going on in the house, but it was the most interesting to me, as to others,

and I determined to look with all my might at the duke and at pretty Miss Nelson, of whom I had only had a glimpse on arriving. If she were really nice, I did hope that Bertie would n't get her!

My costume pressed as weightily on her ladyship's mind, as if I had been a favourite poodle about to be sent, all ribboned and clipped, to a dog show. She did not forget the slippers and stockings, and the chauffeur was ordered to take me into Clermont-Ferrand to buy them. Fortunately she did n't know how much I looked forward to the excursion!

At precisely three o'clock I walked out to the castle garage, near the stables, and found Jack getting the car ready; but I did not find him alone. The garage is a big and splendid one, and not only were the three household dragons in their stalls, but four or five strange beasts, pets of visitors; and the finest of these (after our blue Aigle) was the white Majestic of the Duc de Divonne. That gentleman, whom I recognized easily from a description breathed into my ear by a countess's countess, at luncheon, was in the garage when I arrived, showing off his automobile to Miss Nelson. The ducal chauffeur lurked in the background, duster in hand, and Mr. Herbert Stokes occupied as large a space as possible in the foreground.

Nobody deigned to take any open notice of me, though Bertie threw me a stealthy smile of recognition, carefully screened from Miss Nelson, but as the Aigle was swallowing a last refreshing draught of petrol, I had time to observe the actors in the little drama whose plot I had already heard.

Yes, though Miss Daisy Nelson looked even prettier

than I thought her last night, I could quite believe the bilious maid's statement that she was *une petite chatte.* Her green-gray eyes, very effective under thick masses of auburn hair, were turned up at the outer corners in a fascinating, sly little way; and her cupid-bow lips, which turned down at *their* corners, were a bit redder than Nature's formula ordains. Nevertheless I could n't help liking her, just as one likes a lovely, playful Persian kitten which may rub its adorable nose against your hand, or scratch with its naughty claws. And she was enjoying herself so much, the pretty, expensive-looking creature! As Pamela would say, it was evident that she was "having the time of her life," revelling in the admiration and rivalry of the two men; delighted with her own power over them, and her importance as a beauty and an heiress, the only unmarried girl in the house party; amusing herself by making one man miserable and the other happy, sending them up and down on a mental sea-saw, by turns.

As for the little Duc de Divonne, his profile is of the Roman Emperor order, and his eyes like the last coals in a dying fire. I said to myself that, if Miss Nelson should become a duchess, she would have to pay for some of her girlish antics in pre-duchess days. Still, I decided that if I had to choose, it would be the duke before Bertie.

The girl kept both her men busy, and after the first glance Bertie ignored my existence: but the Duke, fired by a moment's neglect, flamed out with an inspiration. He "dared" Miss Nelson to take a lesson from him in driving his car, with no other chaperon than the chauffeur. "All right, I will," said she, "and I bet you I 'll be an expert after one trial."

"What do you bet?" asked the Duke.

She smiled flirtatiously in answer and Bertie stood forlorn, his nice pink complexion turning an ugly salmon colour. In a minute the white car was off, Miss Nelson beside the duke, the chauffeur like a small nut in a large shell, lolling in the tonneau. Bertie turned to us, and having looked kindly at me, sharply demanded of Jack where he was going.

"Mademoiselle has an errand."

"Ah! then I 'll drive Mademoiselle. Wish I had a tenner for every time I 've driven an Aigle! You can sit inside, in case there 's work to do."

My eyes opened widely, but I said nothing. I glanced at Jack, and saw his face harden.

"I have been told to drive the car, and it is my duty to drive it unless I receive different orders," said he.

"I 'm giving you different orders," said Bertie.

"I take my orders only from the owner of the car."

"You 're beastly impertinent," snapped Bertie, "and I 'll report you to Sir Samuel."

"As you choose," returned Jack, turning the starting-handle.

"Why don't you say 'sir' when you speak to me? You don't seem to have trained into chauffeur manners yet."

"If I were your chauffeur, you would have the right to criticize. As I 'm not, and never will be, you have n't. Mademoiselle, the car 's ready. Will you get in?"

I jumped into my usual place, beside the driver's seat.

"Ah, you sit by the chauffeur, do you?" said Bertie. "I don't wonder he wants to keep his job."

For an instant I was afraid that Jack would strike him.

My blood rushed to my head, and I half rose from the seat, with a choked, warning whisper of "Jack!"

It was the first time I 'd called him that, except to myself, and I saw him give the faintest start. He looked at the other man, and then, though Bertie stepped quickly forward as if to open the car door and jump in, he sprang to his place, and we were off.

"He means mischief," I said, when I felt able to speak.

"So do I, if he does," answered Jack.

"I wish you 'd do me a favour," I went on. "Keep away from that awful ball to-night."

"What! With you there? I know my business better."

I could n't help laughing. "Your present business, I believe," said I, "is that of a chauffeur."

"With extra duty as watch-dog."

"I can't bear to have you see me in the ridiculous get-up Lady Turnour is making me wear, that 's the selfish part of my reason — and — and it will be so *horrid* for you, in every way."

"I 'm callous to anything they can do now, except one thing."

"What?"

"If you don't know already, I mean where you 're concerned."

"You 're very kind to me."

"Kind? Yes, I am very 'kind.' A man has to be abnormally 'kind' to want to look after a girl like you."

"How bitterly you speak!" I exclaimed, hardly understanding him.

"I feel bitter sometimes. Do you wonder? But for heaven's sake, don't let 's talk of me. Let 's talk of something pleasant. Would you care to do a little sight-seeing in Clermont-Ferrand, if your shopping does n't take us too long?"

I assured him that it would not take ten minutes; and it did n't take more. I saved a franc on the transaction, too, which would console her ladyship if I got back a few minutes late; and with that thought in my mind, I abandoned myself to the joy of the expedition. We went to the Petrifying Fountain, and inspected its strange menagerie of stone animals; we made a dash into the Cathedral where St. Louis was married, and looked at the beautiful thirteenth-century glass in the windows, and the strange frescoes; we rushed in and out of Notre Dame du Port, stopping on the way in the *Place* where the first Crusade was proclaimed, and to gaze at the house and statue of Pascal. Jack would squander some of his extremely hard earned money on a box of the burnt almonds for which Clermont-Ferrand is celebrated; and when we had seen everything I dared stop to see, he ran the car to Montferrand, to show me some ancient and wonderful houses, famous all over France. Eventually he threatened to spin me out to Royat, but I pleaded the certainty that Lady Turnour would wish to change into her smartest tea-gown for "feef oclocky" and that I must be there to assist at the ceremony.

So we turned castleward, with all the speed the law allows, if not a little more; and I arrived with a pair of red stockings, cheap high-heeled slippers, a franc in change, and a queer presentiment of dangerous things to happen.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ALTHOUGH a good many neighbours were coming to the Château de Roquemartine to look on at the servants' ball, they were all to drive or motor over in their ordinary dinner dress; it was only the servants themselves who were to "make toilettes."

Lady Turnour, however, who regretted having missed the smart ball for the great world, given a few nights before, determined that people should be forced to appreciate her wealth and position; and the wardrobe of Solomon in all his glory could hardly have produced anything to exceed her gold tissue, diamanté.

When I had squeezed, and poked, and pushed her into it, and was bejewelling her, Sir Samuel came, as usual, to have his white cravat tied by me. Bertie, too, appeared, dressed for dinner, and watched me with silent amusement as I performed my evening duty for his stepfather.

"Pretty gorgeous, are n't you?" he remarked to Lady Turnour; but she was flattered rather than annoyed by the criticism, and sailed away good-natured, leaving me to gather up the few jewels of her collection which she had discarded. Lately I had been trusted with her treasures, and felt the responsibility disagreeably, especially as my mistress — when she remembered it — counted everything ostentatiously over, after relieving me of my charge.

To-night I had just begun picking up the brooches, bracelets, diamond stars, coronets and bursting suns which illuminated the dressing-table firmament, when Bertie walked in again, through the door that he had left ajar.

"I came back because my necktie's a failure," said he. "My man must be in love, I should think. Probably with you! Anyhow, something's the matter; his fingers are all thumbs. But you turned out my old governor rippin'ly. You 'll do me, won't you?"

As he spoke, he untied his cravat, and produced another.

"I 'm sorry," I said. "I don't know how to do *that* kind of tie."

"What — what?" he stared. "It 's just the same as the governor's — only a little better. Come along, there 's a dear." He had pushed the door to; now he shut it.

I walked to the other end of the room, and began folding a blouse. "You 'd better give your valet another trial," I said. "I 'm *not* a valet. I 'm Lady Turnour's maid."

"She 's in luck to get you."

"I 'm engaged to wait upon *her*."

"You are stiff! You do the governor's tie."

"Sir Samuel 's very kind to me."

"Well, I 'll be kind, too. I 'd like nothing better. I 'll be a lot kinder than he 'd dare to be. I say, I 've got a present for you — something rippin', that you 'll like. You can wear it at the ball to-night, but you 'd better not tell anyone who gave it to you — what? You

shall have it for tyin' my necktie. Now, don't you call that 'kind'?"

I stopped folding the blouse, and increased my height by at least an inch. "No," I said, "I call it impertinent, and I shall be obliged if you will leave Lady Turnour's room. That 's the only thing you can do for me."

"By Jove!" said Bertie. "What theatre were you at before you took to lady's maidin'?"

To this I deigned no answer.

"Anyhow, you 're a rippin' little actress."

Silence.

"And a pretty girl. As pretty as they make 'em."

I invented a new kind of sigh, a cross between a snarl and a moan.

"Tell me, what 's the mystery? There is a mystery about you, you know. Not a bit of good tryin' to deceive me. . . . You might as well own up. I can keep a secret as well as the next one."

A tapping of my foot. A slamming of a wardrobe door, which was able to squeak furiously without loss of dignity.

"What *were* you before my lady took you on? . . . Look here, if you don't answer, I shall begin to think the secret 's got to do with *those*." And he pointed to the dressing table, where the jewels still lay. He even put out his hand and took up the bursting sun. (How I sympathized with it for bursting!) "Worth somethin' — what?"

"You can think whatever you like," I flashed at him, "if only you 'll go out of this room."

"Pity your chauffeur is n't at hand for you to run

to," Bertie half sneered, half laughed, for he was keeping his hateful, teasing good nature. "And by the way, talkin' of him, since you 're such a little prude, I 'll just warn you in a friendly way to look out for that chap. You don't know his history — what? I 'm sure the governor does n't."

"Sir Samuel knows he can drive, and that he 's a *gentleman*," said I, with meaning emphasis.

"Well, I 've warned you," replied Bertie, injured. "You may see which one of us is really your friend, before you 're out of this galley. But if you want to be a good and happy little girl, you 'd best be nice to me. I shall find out all about you, you know."

That was his exit speech; and the only way in which I could adequately express my opinion of it was to bang the door on his back.

The ball was in a huge vault of a room which had once been a granary. The stone floor had been worn smooth by many feet and several centuries, and the blank gray walls were brightened with drapery of flags, yards of coloured cotton, paper flowers and evergreens, arranged with an effect which none save Latin hands could have given. Dinner above and below stairs was early, and before ten the guests began to assemble in the ballroom. All the servant-world had dined in ball costume, excepting Jack and myself, and it was only at the last minute that the cricket hopped upstairs and wriggled into its neatly reduced lobster shell.

I had visions of my brother lurking gloomily yet observantly in obscure corners, ready at any moment for a

sortie in my defence; but when I sneaked, sidled, and slid into the ballroom, making myself as small as possible that I might pass unobserved in spite of my sensational redness, I had a surprise. Near the door stood the chauffeur in evening dress, out-princing and out-duking every prince and duke among the Marquise de Roquemartine's guests. And I, who had n't even known that he possessed evening clothes, could not have opened my eyes wider if my knight had appeared in full armour.

I had broken the news of the scarlet dress to him, nevertheless I saw it was a shock. To each one, the other was a new person, as we stood and talked together. I said not a word about my scene with Bertie, for there was trouble enough between the two already; but when Jack told me that, if I were asked to dance by anyone objectionable, I must say I was engaged to him, I knew which One loomed largest and ugliest in his mind.

A glance round the big, bright room showed me many strangers. All were servants, however, for the grand people had not yet come down to play their little game of condescension. A band from Clermont-Ferrand was making music, but the ball was to be opened by the marquise and her guests, who were to honour their servants by dancing the first dance with them. Each noble lady was to select a cook, butler, footman, chauffeur, or groom, according to her pleasure; and each noble lord was to lead out the female worm which least displeased his eye.

Hardly had I time to dive deep into the wave of domesticity, when the great moment arrived, and a spray of aristocracy sprinkled the top of that heavy wave, with the dazzling sparkle of its jewels and its beauty. Really it

was a pretty sight! I had to admire it; and in watching the play of light and colour I forgot my private worries until I saw Bertie bowing before me.

The marquise had just honoured her own butler. The marquis was offering his arm to the housekeeper; the Duc de Divonne had led out Miss Nelson's bilious maid, appalling in apple-green: Miss Nelson was returning the compliment by giving her hand to his valet: why should not this young gentleman dance with his step-mother-in-law's maid?

There seemed no reason why not, except the maid's disinclination; and sudden side-slip of the brain caused by the glassy impudence in Mr. Stokes's eye so disturbed my equilibrium that I forgot Jack's offer. He did not forget, however — it would hardly have been Jack, if he had — but stepped forward to claim me as I began to stammer some excuse.

"Oh, come, that is n't playin' the game," said Bertie. "We 're all dancin' with servants this turn. Go ask a lady, Dane."

"I have asked a lady, and she has promised to dance with me," said Jack. "Miss d'Angely ——"

"Oh, that 's the lady's name, is it? I 'm glad to know," mumbled Bertie, as Jack whisked me away from under his nose.

"By Jove, I ought n't to have let that out, ought I?" said Jack, remorseful. "The less he knows about you, the better; and as Lady Turnour has no idea of pronunciation, if it had n't been for my stupidity ——"

"Don't call it that," I stopped him, as we began to dance. "It does n't matter a bit — unless it should occur to the

Duchesse de Melun to ask him questions about me. And I 'd rather not think about that possibility, or anything else disagreeable, to spoil this heavenly waltz."

"You *can* dance a little, can't you?" said Jack, in a tone and with a look that made the words better than any compliment any other man had ever paid me on my dancing, though I 'd been likened to feathers, and vine-tendrils, and various poetically airy things.

"You are n't so bad yourself, brother," I retorted, in the same tone. "Our steps suit, don't they?"

He muttered something, which sounded like "Just a little better than anything else on earth, that 's all"; but of course it could n't really have been what my ears tried to make my vanity believe.

When we stopped — which we did n't do while there was music to go on with — I was conscious that people were looking at us, and nobody with more interest than the Duchesse de Melun. I glanced hastily away before my eye had quite caught hers; but no female thing needs to give a whole eye to what is going on around her. I knew, although my back was soon turned in her direction, that the Duchesse de Melun was talking to Lady Turnour, and I guessed the subject of the conversation. Thank goodness, my mistress's mind had never compassed more than a misleading "Elise," and thank goodness, also, many of the great folk were preparing to leave us humble ones to ourselves, now that their condescension had been proved in the first dance. Would the duchess go? Yes — oh joy! — she gets up from her seat. She moves toward the door. Lady Turnour has risen too, but sits down again, lured by the proximity of a princess. All will be

well, perhaps! The duchess may n't think of catechizing Bertie, now that my mistress has put her off the track. He, with several other young men, evidently means to stop and see the fun out. If only he would sit still, now, beside the marquise! But no. Miss Nelson and the Duc de Divonne are going out together. Bertie must needs jump up and dash across the room for a word with the girl. Discouraged by some laughing answer flung over her shoulder, he almost bumps against the duchess. Horror! She speaks to him quite eagerly. She puts a question. He replies. She bends her head near to him. They walk slowly out of the room, talking, talking. All is up with Lys d'Angely! The next thing that Meddlesome Matty of a duchess will do, is to wire Cousin Catherine Milvaine. Crash! thunder — lightning — hail! — Monsieur Charretier on my track again.

I resolved, as I saw myself lying shattered at my own feet, to pick up the bits and say nothing to Jack, lest he should blame his own inadvertent dropping of my name for all present and future mischief. Being a man, he can see things only with his eyes; and as he happened to be looking at me, he missed the pantomime at the other end of the room. I was looking at him too, but of course that did n't prevent me from seeing other things; and while I was chatting with him, and wondering how long it might be before the thunderbolt (Monsieur Charretier) should fall, I received another invitation to dance. This time it was from a delightful old boy who looked sixty and felt twenty-one.

He was ruddy-brown, with tight gray curls on his head,

and deep dimples in his cheeks. If anyone had told me that he was not an English admiral I should have known it was a fib.

"I hope you are n't engaged for this next waltz?" said he. "I should like very much to have it with you." And he spoke as nicely as he would to a young girl of his own world, although he must have heard from someone that I was a lady's maid.

I glanced at Jack, but evidently he approved of admirals as partners for his sister. He kept himself in the background, smiling benevolently, and I skipped away with my brown old sailor, as the music for the dance began.

"Heard you spoke English," said he, encircling my Directoire waist with the arm of a sea-going Hercules, "otherwise I should n't have had the courage to come up and speak to you."

I laughed. "A Dreadnought afraid of a fishing-smack!"

"My word, if you were a fishin'-smack, my little friend, you would n't lack for fish to catch," chuckled the old gentleman, who was waltzing like an elderly angel — as all sailors do. Now, if Bertie had said what he said, I should have been offended, but coming from the admiral it cheered me up.

"You *are* an admiral, are n't you?" I was bold enough to ask.

"Who told you that?" he wanted to know.

"My eyes," said I.

"They 're bright ones," he retorted. "But I suppose I do look an old sea-dog — what? A regular old salt-water dog. But by George, it 's hot water I 've got into to-night. D' ye see that stout lady we 're just passin'?—

the one in the red wig and yellow frock covered with paste or diamonds?"

(If she could have heard the description! It was Lady Turnour, in her gold tissue, her Bond Street jewellery shop, and, my charge, her beautifully undulated, copper-tinted transformation.)

"Yes, I see her," I said faintly, as we waltzed past; and I wondered why she was glaring.

"I suppose you did n't notice me doin' the first dance with her? Well, I asked her because they said we 'd all got to invite servants to begin with, and as the best were snapped up before I got a chance, I walked over to her like a man. Give you my word, where all are dressed like duchesses, I took her for a cook."

I laughed so much that I shook my feet out of time with the music.

"Did you treat her like a cook, too?" I gurgled. "Ask her to give you her favourite recipe for soup?"

"Heaven forbid, no. I treated her like a countess. One would a cook, you know. It was afterward I got into the hot water. I popped her down in a seat when we 'd scrambled through a turn or two of the dance, and that was all right; but instead of stoppin' where she was put, she must have stood up with some other poor chap when my back was turned, and been plamped down somewhere else. Anyhow, I danced the end of the waltz with the Marquise de Roquemartine, when she 'd finished doin' the polite to the butler, and when we sat down to breathe at last, for the sake of somethin' to say I asked if the fat lady in yellow was her own cook, or a visitor's cook. Anyhow, I was certain of the *cook:* fancied myself on

spottin' a cook anywhere. Well, the marquise giggled 'Take care!' and nearly had a fit. And if there was n't my late partner close to my shoulder. 'That's Lady Turnour, one of my guests,' said the marquise. Little witch, she looked more pleased than shocked; but 'pon my honour, you could have knocked me down with a feather. I hope the good lady did n't hear, but my friends tell me I talk as if I were yellin' through a megaphone, so I 'm afraid she got the news."

"What did you do?" I gasped.

"Do? I jumped up as if I 'd been shot, and trotted over to ask you to dance. But I expect it will get about."

Now I knew why Lady Turnour had glared. Poor woman! I was really sorry for her — on this, her happy night!

CHAPTER XXIX

IT NEVER rains, but it pours, after dry weather," says Pamela de Nesle. And so it was for the Turnour family. They had had their run of luck, and everything determinedly went wrong for them that night.

For her ladyship, there was the dreadful douche of the admiral's mistake, and the Marquise de Roquemartine's coming to hear of it. (Wicked little witch, I 'm sure she could n't resist telling the story to everyone!) For Bertie, the blow of an announcement, before the ball was over, that Miss Nelson was going to marry the Duc de Divonne (she went out of the room to get engaged to him). For Sir Samuel, a telegram from his London solicitors advising him to hurry home and straighten out some annoying business tangle.

After all, however, I doubt that the telegram ought to be classed among disasters, as it gave the family a good excuse to escape without delay from the château which they had so much wished to enter.

Lady Turnour had hysterics in her bedroom, having retired early on account of a "headache." She pretended that her rage was caused by a rent in her golden train, made by "that clumsy Admiral Gray who came over with the Frasers, and had the impudence to almost *force* me to dance with him — gouty old horror!" But I know it was

the rent in her vanity, not her dress, which made her gurgle, and wail, and choke, until frightened Sir Samuel patted her on the back, and she stopped short, to scold him.

Bertie came in, ostensibly to learn his father's plans, but really, I surmised, to suggest some of his own; and Lady Turnour relieved her feelings by stirring up evil ones in him. "So sure you were going to get the girl! Why, you wrote your stepfather the other day, you were practically engaged," she sneered, delighted that she was not the only one who had suffered humiliations at the castle.

"If she had n't seen you, I believe it would have been all right," growled Bertie, vicious as a chained dog who has lost his bone. And then Lady Turnour had hysterics all over again, and Sir Samuel told Bertie that he was an ungrateful young brute. The three raged together, and I could not go, because I had to hold sal-volatile under her ladyship's nose. Lady Turnour said that the marquise was no lidy, and for her part she was glad she was n't going to have that cat of a sister in *her* family. She 'd leave the beastly chattoe that night, if she could; but anyhow, she 'd go the first thing in the morning as ever was, so there! People that let their visitors be insulted, and did nothing but laugh! — *She'd* show them, if they ever came to London, *that* she would, though she might n't be a marquise herself, exactly. Not one of the lot should ever be invited to her house, not if they were all married to Bertie. And who was Bertie, anyhow?

Sir Samuel said 'darling' to her, and quite different words that began with "d" to his stepson; and Bertie, seeing the error of his ways, apologized humbly. His apologies were eventually accepted; and when he had

intimated to her ladyship that she should be introduced to all his "swell friends" in England, it was settled that he should make one of the party in the car, his valet travelling by train. As this arrangement completed itself, Mr. Bertie suddenly remembered my presence, and flashed me a look of triumph.

I, listening silently, had been rejoicing in the development of the situation as far as I was concerned; for the sooner we got away from the château, the less likely was Monsieur Charretier to succeed in catching us up. But when I heard that we were to have Bertie with us, my heart sank, especially as his look told me that I counted for something in his plan. The chauffeur counted for something, too, I feared. In any case, the rest of the tour was spoiled, and if it had n't been for the thought that when it was over, Jack and I might meet no more, I should have wished it cut short.

Good-byes were perfunctory in the morning, and nobody seemed heartbroken at parting from the Turnour family. The big luggage, packed early and in haste, was sent on to Paris; and when the chauffeur had disposed of Bertie's additions to the Aigle's load, hostilities began.

"Put down that seat for me," said Mr. Stokes to Mr. Dane, indicating one of the folding chairs in the glass cage, and carefully waiting to do so until I was within eye and earshot.

They glared at each other like two tigers, for an instant, and then Jack put the seat down — I knew why. A refusal on his part to do such a service for his master's stepson would mean that he must resign or be discharged

— and leave me to deal unaided with a cad. I think Bertie knew, too, why he was unhesitatingly obeyed; and racked his brain for further tests. It was not long before he had a brilliant idea.

The car stopped at a level crossing, to let a train go by, and Bertie availed himself of the opportunity to get out.

"Sir Samuel 's going' to let me try my hand at drivin'," said he. "I don't think much of your form, and I 've been tellin' him so. My best pal is a director of the Aigle company, and I 've driven his car a lot of times. Her ladyship will let Elise sit inside, and I 'll watch your style a bit before I take the wheel."

Not a word said Jack. He did n't even look at me as he helped me down from the seat which had been mine for so many happy days. I crept miserably into the stuffy glass cage, where, in the folding chair, I sat as far forward as my own shape and the car's allowed; Sir Samuel's fat knees in my back, Lady Turnour's sharp voice in my ears. And for scenery, I had Bertie's aggressive shoulders and supercilious gesticulations.

The road to Nevers I scarcely saw. I think it was flat; but Bertie's driving made it play cup and ball with the car in a curious way, which a good chauffeur could hardly have managed if he tried. We passed Riom, Gannat, Aigueperse, I know; and at Moulins, in the valley of the Allier, we lunched in a hurry. To Nevers we came early, but it was there we were to stop for the night, and there we did stop, in a drizzle of rain which prevented sight-seeing for those who had the wish, and the freedom, to go about. As for me, I was ordered

by Lady Turnour to mend Mr. Stokes's socks, he having made peace by offering to "give her a swagger dinner in town."

Bertie's cleverness was not confined to ingratiating himself with her ladyship. He contrived adroitly to damage the steering-gear by grazing a wall as he turned the Aigle into the hotel courtyard, and by this feat disposed of the chauffeur's evening, which was spent in hard work at the garage. Such dinner as Jack got, he ate there, in the shape of a furtive sandwich or two, otherwise we should not have been able to leave in the morning at the early hour suggested by Mr. Stokes.

Warned by the incidents of yesterday, Sir Samuel desired his chauffeur to take the wheel again from Nevers to Paris. But — no doubt with the view of keeping us apart, and devising new tortures for his enemy — Bertie elected to play Wolf to Jack's Spartan Boy, and sit beside him. This relegated me to the cage again, with back-massage from Sir Samuel's knees.

Before Fontainebleau, I found myself in a familiar land. As far as Montargis I had motored with the Milvaines more than once, conducted by Monsieur Charretier, in a great car which might have been mine if I had accepted it, not "with a pound of tea," but with two hundred pounds of millionaire. I knew the lovely valley of the Loing, and the forest which makes the world green and shadowy from Bourrau to Fontainebleau, a world where poetry and history clasp hands. I should have had plenty to say about it all to Jack, if we had been together, but I was still inside the car, and by this time Bertie had induced his stepfather to consent to his driving

again. He pleaded that there had been something wrong with the ignition yesterday. That was why the car had not gone well. It had not been his fault at all. Sir Samuel, always inclined to say "Yes" rather than "No" to one he loved, said "Yes" to Bertie, and had cause to regret it. Close to Fontainebleau Mr. Stokes saw another car, with a pretty girl in it. The car was going faster than ours, as it was higher powered and had a lighter load. Naturally, being himself, it occurred to Bertie that it would be well to show the pretty girl what he could do. We were going up hill, as it happened, and he changed speed with a quick, fierce crash. The Aigle made a sound as if she were gritting her teeth, shivered, and began to run back. Bertie, losing his head, tried a lower speed, which had no effect, and Lady Turnour had begun to shriek when Jack leaned across and put on the hand-brake. The car stopped, just in time not to run down a pony cart full of children.

No wonder the poor dear Aigle had gritted her teeth! Several of them turned out to be broken in the gear box.

"We 're done!" said Jack. "She 'll have to be towed to the nearest garage. Pity we could n't have got on to Paris."

"Can't you put in some false teeth?" suggested Lady Turnour, at which Bertie laughed, and was thereupon reproached for the accident, as he well deserved to be.

Then the question was what should be the next step for the passengers. I expected to be trotted reluctantly on to Paris by train, leaving Jack behind to find a "tow," and see the dilemma through to an end of some sort,

but to my joyful surprise Bertie used all his wiles upon the family to induce them to stop at Fontainebleau. It was a beautiful place, he argued, and they would like it so much, that they would come to think the breakdown a blessing in disguise. In any case, he had intended advising them to pause for tea, and to stay the night if they cared for the place. They would find a good hotel, practically in the forest; and he had an acquaintance who owned a château near by, a very important sort of chap, who knew everybody worth knowing in French society. If the Governor and "Lady T." liked, he would go dig his friend up, and bring him round to call. Maybe they 'd all be invited to the château for dinner. The man had a lot of motors and would send one for them, very likely — perhaps would even lend a car to take them on to Paris to-morrow morning.

I listened to these arguments and suggestions with a creepy feeling in the roots of my hair, for I, too, have an "acquaintance" who owns a château near Fontainebleau: a certain Monsieur Charretier. He, also, has a "lot of motors" and would, I knew, if he were "in residence" be delighted to lend a car and extend an invitation to dinner, if informed that Lys d'Angely was of the party. Could it be, I thought, that Mr. Stokes was acquainted with Monsieur Charretier, or that, not being acquainted, he had heard something from the Duchesse de Melun, and was making a little experiment with me?

Perhaps I imagined it, but it seemed that he glanced my way triumphantly, when Lady Turnour agreed to stay in the hope of meeting the nameless, but important,

friend; and I felt that, whatever happened, I must have a word of advice from Jack.

The discussion had taken place in the road, or rather, at the side of the road, where the combined exertions of Jack and Bertie had pushed the wounded Aigle. The chauffeur, having examined the car and pronounced her helpless, walked back to interview a carter we had passed not long before, with the view of procuring a tow. Now, just as the discussion was decided in favour of stopping over night at Fontainebleau, he appeared again, in the cart.

We were so near the hotel in the woods that we could be towed there in half an hour, and, ignominious as the situation was, Lady Turnour preferred it to the greater evil of walking. I remained in the car with her, the chauffeur steered, the carter towed, and Sir Samuel and his stepson started on in advance, on foot.

At the hotel Jack was to leave us, and be towed to a garage; but, in desperation, I murmured an appeal as he gave me an armful of rugs. "I *must* ask you about something," I whispered. "Can you come back in a little less than an hour, and look for me in the woods, somewhere just out of sight of the hotel?"

"Yes," he said. "I can and will. You may depend on me."

That was all, but I was comforted, and the rugs became suddenly light.

Rooms were secured, great stress being laid upon a good sitting-room (in case the important friend should call), and I unpacked as usual. When my work was done, I asked her ladyship's permission to go out for a

little while. She looked suspicious, clawed her brains for an excuse to refuse, but, as there was n't a buttonless glove, or a holey stocking among the party, she reluctantly gave me leave. I darted away, plunged into the forest, and did not stop walking until I had got well out of sight of the hotel. Then I sat down on a mossy log under a great tree, and looked about for Jack.

A man was coming. I jumped up eagerly, and went to meet him as he appeared among the trees.

It was Mr. Herbert Stokes.

CHAPTER XXX

"I FOLLOWED you," he said.

"I thought so," said I. "It was like you."

"I want to talk to you," he explained.

"But I don't want to talk to you," I objected.

"You 'll be sorry if you 're rude. What I came to say is for your own good."

"I doubt that!" said I, looking anxiously down one avenue of trees after another, for a figure that would have been doubly welcome now.

"Well, I can easily prove it, if you 'll listen."

"As you have longer legs than I have, I am obliged to listen."

"You won't regret it. Now, come, my dear little girl, don't put on any more frills with me. I 'm gettin' a bit fed up with 'em."

(I should have liked to choke him with a whole mouthful of "frills," the paper kind you put on ham at Christmas; but as I had none handy, I thought it would only lead to undignified controversy to allude to them.)

"I had a little conversation about you with the Duchesse de Melun night before last," Bertie went on, with evident relish. "Ah, I thought that would make you blush. I say, you 're prettier than ever when you do that! It was she began it. She asked me if I knew your name, and how Lady T. found you. Her Ladyship could n't get any

further than 'Elise,' for, if she knew any more, she 'd forgotten it; but thanks to your friend the shuvver, I could go one better. When I told the duchess you called yourself d'Angely, or something like that, she said 'I was sure of it!' Now, I expect you begin to smell a rat — what?"

"I daresay you 've been carrying one about in your pocket ever since," I snapped, "though I can't think what it has to do with me. I 'm not interested in dead rats."

"This is your own rat," said Bertie, grinning. "What 'll you give to know what the duchess told me about you?"

"Nothing," I said.

"Well, then, I 'll be generous and let you have it for nothing. She told me she thought she recognized you, but until she heard the name, she supposed she must be mistaken; that it was only a remarkable resemblance between my stepmother's maid and a girl who 'd run away under very peculiar circumstances from the house of a friend of hers. What do you think of that?"

"That the duchess is a cat," I replied, promptly.

"Most women are."

"In *your* set, perhaps."

"She said there was a man mixed up with the story, a rich middle-aged chap of the name of Charretier, with a big house in Paris and a new château he 'd built, near Fontainebleau. She gave me a card to him."

"He 's sure not to be at home," I remarked.

Bertie's face fell; but he brightened again. "Anyhow you admit you know him."

"One has all sorts of acquaintances," I drawled, with a shrug of my shoulders.

"You 're a sly little kitten — if you 're not a cat. You heard me say I thought of calling at the château."

"And you heard me say the owner was n't at home."

"You seem well acquainted with his movements."

"I happened to see him, on his way south, at Avignon, some days ago."

"Did he see you?"

"Is n't that my affair — and his?"

"By Jove — you 've got good cheek, to talk like this to your mistress's stepson! But maybe you think you won't have difficulty in finding a place that pays you better — what?"

"I could n't find one to pay me much worse."

"Look here, my dear, I 'm not out huntin' for repartee. I want to have an understanding with you."

"I don't see why."

"Yes, you do, well enough. You know I like you — in spite of your impudence."

"And I dislike you because of yours. Oh, do go away and leave me, Mr. Stokes."

"I won't. I 've got a lot to say to you. I 've only just begun, but you keep interruptin' me, and I can't get ahead."

"Finish then."

"Well, what I want to say is this. I always meant we should stop at Fontainebleau."

"Oh — you damaged your stepfather's car on purpose! He would be obliged to you."

"Not quite that. I intended to get them to have tea

here, and while they were moonin' about I was going to have a chat with you. I was goin' to tell you about that card to Charretier, and somethin' else. That the duchess asked me where we would stop in Paris, and I told her at the best there is, of course — Hotel Athenée. She said she 'd wire her friends you 'd run away from, that they could find you there; and if Charretier was n't at Fontainebleau when we passed through, these people would certainly know where to get at him. I warned you the other night, did n't I? that if you would n't be good and confide in me I 'd find out what you refused to tell me yourself; and I have, you see. Clever, are n't I?"

"You 're the hatefullest man I ever *heard* of!" I flung at him.

"Oh, I say! Don't speak too soon. You don't know all yet. If you don't want me to, I won't call on Charretier. Lady T. and her tuft-huntin' can go hang! And you shan't stop at the Athenée to be copped by the Duchess's friends, if you don't like. That 's what I wanted to see you about. To tell you it all depends on yourself."

"How does it depend on myself?" I asked, cautiously.

"All you have to do, to get off scot free is to be a little kind to poor Bertie. You can begin by givin' him a kiss, here in the poetic and what-you-may-call-'em forest of Fontainebleau."

"I would n't kiss you if you were made of gold and diamonds, and I could have you melted down to spend!" I exclaimed. And as I delivered this ultimatum, I turned to run. His legs might be longer than mine, but

I weighed about one-third as much as he, which was in my favour if I chose to throw dignity to the winds.

As I whisked away from him, he caught me by the dress, and I heard the gathers rip. I had to stop. I could n't arrive at the hotel without a skirt.

"You 're a cad — a *cad!*" I stammered.

"And you 're a fool. Look here, I can lose you your job and have you sent to the prison where naughty girls go. See what I 've got in my pocket."

Still grasping my frock, he scooped something out of an inner pocket of his coat, and held it for me to look at, in the hollow of his palm. I gave a little cry. It was Lady Turnour's gorgeous bursting sun.

"I nicked that off the dressin' table the other night, when you were n't looking. Has Lady T. been askin' for it?"

"No," I answered, speaking more to myself than to him. "She — she 's had too much to think of. She did n't count her things that night; and at Nevers she did n't open the bag."

"So much the worse for you, my pet, when she does find out. She left her jewels in your charge. When I came into the room, they were all lyin' about on the dressin' table, and you were playin' with 'em."

"I was putting them back into her bag."

"So you say. Jolly careless of you not to know you had n't put this thing back. It 's about the best of the lot she had n't got plastered on for the servants' ball."

"It was careless," I admitted. "But it was your fault. You came in, and were so horrid, and upset me

so much that I forgot what I 'd put into the bag already, and what I had n't."

"Lady T. does n't know I went back to her room."

"I 'll tell her!" I cried.

"I 'll bet you 'll tell her, right enough. But I can tell a different story. I 'll say I did n't go near the room. My story will be that I was walkin' through the woods this afternoon on my way to Charretier's château when I saw you with the thing in your hands, lookin' at it. Probably goin' to ask the shuvver to dispose of it for you — what? and share profits."

"Oh, you coward!" I exclaimed, and snatched the diamond brooch from him.

Instantly he let go my dress, laughing.

"*That 's* right! That 's what I wanted," he said. "Now you 've got it, and you can keep it. I 'll tell Lady T. where to look for it — unless you 'll change your mind, and give me that kiss."

I was so angry, so stricken with horror and a kind of nightmare fear which I had not time to analyze, that I stood silent, trembling all over, with the brooch in my hand. How silly I had been to play his game for him, just like the poor stupid cat who pulled the hot chestnut out of the fire! I don't think any chestnut could ever have been as hot as that bursting sun!

I wanted to drop it in the grass, or throw it as far as I could see it, but dared not, because it would be my fault that it was lost, and Lady Turnour would believe Bertie's story all the more readily. She would think he had seen me with the jewel, and that I 'd hidden it because I was afraid of what he might do.

"To kiss, or not to kiss. *That's* the question," laughed Bertie.

"Is it?" said Jack. And Jack's hand, inside Mr. Stokes's beautiful, tall collar, shook Bertie back and forth till his teeth chattered like castanets, and his good-looking pink face grew more and more like a large, boiled beetroot.

I had seen Jack coming, long enough to have counted ten before he came. But I did n't count ten. I just let him come.

Bertie could not speak: he could only gurgle. And if I had been a Roman lady in the amphitheatre of Nîmes, or somewhere, I 'm afraid I should have wanted to turn my thumb down.

"What was the beast threatening you with?" Jack wanted to know.

"The beast was threatening to make Lady Turnour think I 'd stolen this brooch, which he 'd taken himself," I panted, through the beatings of my heart.

"If you did n't kiss him?"

"Yes. And he was going to do lots of other horrid things, too. Tell Monsieur Charretier — and let my cousins come and find me at the Hotel Athenée, in Paris, and ——"

"He won't do any of them. But there are several things I am going to do to him. Go away, my child. Run off to the house, as quick as you can."

I gasped. "What are you going to do to him?"

"Don't worry. I shan't hurt him nearly as much as he deserves. I 'm only going to do what the Head must have neglected to do to him at school."

"Jack's hand, inside Mr. Stokes's beautiful, tail coliar, shook Bertie back and forth till his teeth chattered like castanets"

Bertie had come out into the woods with a neat little stick, which during part of our conversation he had tucked jauntily under his arm. It now lay on the ground. I saw Jack glance at it.

"Ah!" — I faltered. "Do — do you think you 'd *better?*"

"I know I had. Go, child."

I went.

I had great faith in Jack, faith that he knew what was best for everyone.

CHAPTER XXXI

UNFORTUNATELY I forgot to ask for instructions as to how I should behave when I came to the hotel. And I had the bursting sun still in my hand.

I thought things over, as well as I could with a pounding pulse for every square inch in my body.

If I were a rabbit, I could scurry into my hole and "lay low" while other people fought out their destiny and arranged mine; but being a girl, tingling with my share of American pluck, and blazing with French fire, rabbits seemed to me at the instant only worthy of being made into pie.

Bertie, at this moment, was being made into pie — humble pie; and I don't doubt that the chauffeur, whom he had consistently tortured (because of me) would make him eat a large slice of himself when the humble pie was finished — also because of me. And because it *was* because of me, I knocked at the Turnours' sitting-room door with a bold, brave knock, as if I thought myself their social equal.

They had had tea, and were sitting about, looking graceful in the expectation of seeing Bertie and his French friend.

It was a disappointment to her ladyship to see only me, and she showed it with a frown, but Sir Samuel looked up kindly, as usual.

I laid the bursting sun on the table, and told them everything, very fast, without pausing to take breath, so that they would n't have time to stop me. But I did n't begin with the bursting sun, or even with the beating that Bertie was enjoying in the woods; I began with the Princess Boriskoff, and Lady Kilmarny; and I addressed Sir Samuel, from beginning to end. Somehow, I felt I had his sympathy, even when I rushed at the most embarrassing part, which concerned his stepson and the necktie.

Just as I 'd told about the brooch, and Bertie's threat, and was coming to his punishment, another knock at the door produced the two young men, both pale, but Jack with a noble pallor, while Bertie's was the sick paleness of pain and shame.

"I 've brought him to apologize to Miss d'Angely, in your presence, Sir Samuel, and Lady Turnour's," said the chauffeur. "I see you know something of the story."

"They know all now," said I. For Bertie's face proved the truth of my words, if they had needed proof. His eyes were swimming in tears, and he looked like a whipped school-boy.

But suddenly a whim roused her ladyship to speak up in his defence — or at least to criticize the chauffeur for presuming to take her stepson's chastisement into his hands.

"What right have you to set yourself up as Elise's champion, anyway?" she demanded, shrilly. "Have you and she been getting engaged to each other behind our backs?"

"It would be my highest happiness to be engaged to Miss d'Angely if she would marry me," said Jack, with such a splendidly sincere ring in his voice that I could almost have believed him if I had n't known he was in love with another woman. "But I am no match for her. It 's only as her friend that I have acted in her defence, as any decent man has a right to act when a lady is insulted."

Then Bertie apologized, in a dull voice, with his eyes on the ground, and mumbled a kind of confession, mixed with self-justification. He had pocketed the brooch, yes, meaning to play a trick, but had intended how the redoubtable Simpkins refused to trust herself upon did n't usually mind a bit of a flirtation and a present or two; how was he to know this one was different? Sorry if he had caused annoyance; could say no more — and so on, and so on, until I stopped him, having heard enough.

Poor Sir Samuel was crestfallen, but not too utterly crushed to reproach his bride with unwonted sharpness, when she would have scolded me for carelessness in not putting the brooch away. "Let the girl alone!" he grumbled, "she 's a very good girl, and has behaved well. I wish I could say the same of others nearer to me."

"Of course, Sir Samuel, after what 's happened, you would n't want me to stay in your employ, any more than I would want to stay," said Jack. "Unfortunately the Aigle will be hung up two or three days, till new pinions can be fitted in, at the garage. I can send them out from Paris, if you like; but no doubt you 'll prefer to

have my engagement with you to come to an end to-day. Mr. Stokes has driven the car, and can again."

"Not if I have anything to say about it," murmured her ladyship. "Scattering the poor thing's teeth all over the place!"

"There are plenty of good chauffeurs to be got at short notice in Paris," Jack suggested, "and you are certain to find one by the time you 're ready to start."

"You 're right, Dane. We 'll have to part company," said Sir Samuel. "As for Elise here ——"

"She 'll have to go too," broke in her ladyship. "It 's most inconvenient, and all your stepson's fault — though she 's far from blameless, in my humble opinion, whatever yours may be. Don't tell me that a young man will go about flirting with lady's maids unless they encourage him!"

"I shall leave of course, immediately," said I, my ears tingling.

"Who wants you to do anything else? Though nobody cares for *my* convenience. *I* can always go to the wall. But thank heaven there are maids in Paris as well as chauffeurs. And talking of that combination, my advice to you is, if Dane 's willing to have you, don't turn up your nose at him, but marry him as quickly as you can. I suppose even in your class of life there 's such a thing as *gossip.*"

I was scarlet. Somehow I got out of the room, and while I was scurrying my few belongings into my dressing bag, and spreading out the red satin frock to leave as a legacy to Lady Turnour (in any case, nothing could have induced me to wear it again), Sir Samuel sent me up an

envelope containing a month's wages, and something over. I enclosed the "something over" in another envelope, with a grateful line of refusal, and sent it back.

Thus ends my experience as a motor maid!

What was going to become of me I did n't know, but while I was jamming in hatpins and praying for ideas, there came a knock at the door. A pencilled note from the late chauffeur, signed hastily, "Yours ever, J. D.," and inviting me down to the couriers' dining-room for a conference. There would be no one there but ourselves at this hour, he said, and we should be able to talk over our plans in peace.

What a place to say farewell forever to the only man I ever had, could or would love — a couriers' dining room, with grease spots on the tablecloth! However, there was no help for it, since I was facing the world with fifty francs, and could not afford to pay for a romantic background.

After all that had happened, and especially after certain impertinent references made to our private affairs, I felt a new and very embarrassing shyness in meeting the man with whom I 'd been playing that pleasant little game called "brother and sister." He was waiting for me in the couriers' room, which was even dingier and had more grease spots than I had fancied, and I hurried into speech to cover my nervousness.

"I don't know how I 'm going to thank you for all you 've done for me," I stammered. "That horrible Bertie ——"

"Let 's not talk of him," said Jack. "Put him out of your mind for ever. He has no place there, or in your

life — and no more have any of the incidents that led up to him. You 've had a very bad time of it, poor little girl, and now ——"

"Oh, I have n't," I exclaimed. "I 've been happier than ever before in my life. That is — I — it was all so novel, and like a play ——"

"Well, now the play 's over," Jack broke in, pitying my evident embarrassment. "I wanted to ask you if you 'd let me advise and perhaps help you. We *have* been brother and sister, you know. Nothing can take that away from us."

"No," said I, in a queer little voice. "Nothing can."

"You want to go to England, I know," he went on. "And — if you 'll forgive my taking liberties, you have n't much money in hand, you 've almost told me. I suppose you have n't changed your mind about your relations in Paris? You would n't like to go back to them, or write, and tell them firmly that you won't marry the person they seem to have set their hearts on for you? That you 've made your own choice, and intend to abide by it; but that if they 'll be sensible and receive you, you 're willing to stop with them until — until the man in England ——"

"*What* man in England?" I cut him short, in utter bewilderment.

"Why, the — er — you did n't tell me his name, of course, but that rich chap you expected to meet when you got over to England. Don't you think it would be better if he came to you at your cousins', if they ——"

"There *is n't* any 'rich chap'," I exclaimed. "I don't know what you mean — oh, *yes*, I do, too. I did speak about someone who was very rich, and would be kind to

me. I rather think — I remember now — I *guessed* you imagined it was a man; but that seemed the greatest joke, so I did n't try to undeceive you. Fancy your believing that, all this time, though, and thinking about it!"

"I 've thought of it on an average once every three minutes," said Jack.

"You 're chaffing now, of course. Why, the person I hoped might be kind to me in England is an old lady — oh, but such a funny old lady! — who wanted me to be her companion, and said, no matter when I came, if it were years from now, I must let her know, for she would like to have me with her to help chase away a dragon of a maid she 's afraid of. I met her only once, in the train the night before I arrived at Cannes; but she and I got to be the greatest friends, and her bulldog, Beau——"

"Her bulldog, Beau!"

"A perfect lamb, though he looks like a cross between a crocodile and a gnome. The old lady's name is Miss Paget ——"

"My aunt!"

I stared at Jack, not knowing how to take this exclamation. The few Englishmen I met when mamma and I were together, or when I lived with the Milvaines, were rather fond of using that ejaculation when it was apparently quite irrelevant. If you told a youthful Englishman that you were not allowed to walk or bicycle alone in the Bois, he was as likely as not to say "My aunt!" In fact, whatever surprised him was apt to elicit this cry. I have known several young men who gave vent to it at intervals of from half to three-quarters of an hour; but I had never before heard Jack

make the exclamation, so when I had looked at him and he had looked at me in an emotional kind of silence for a few seconds, I asked him, "Why 'My aunt'?"

"Because she is my aunt."

"Surely not my Miss Paget?"

"I should think it highly improbable that your Miss Paget and my Miss Paget could be the same, if you had n't mentioned her bulldog, Beau. There can 't be a quantity of Miss Pagets going about the world with bulldogs named Beau. Only my Miss Paget never does go about the world. She hates travelling."

"So does mine. She said that being in a train was no pursuit for a gentlewoman."

"That sounds like her. She 's quite mad."

"She seemed very kind."

"I 'm glad she did — to you. She has seemed rather the contrary to me."

"Oh, what did she do to you?"

"Did her best to spoil my life, that 's all — with the best intentions, no doubt. Still, by Jove, I thank her! If it had n't been for my aunt I should never have seen — my sister."

"Thank you. You 're always kind — and polite. Do you mean it was because of *her* you took to what you call 'shuvving'?"

"Exactly."

"But I thought — I thought ——"

"What?"

"I — don't dare tell you."

"I should think you might know by this time that you can tell me anything. You *must* tell me!"

"I thought it was the beautiful lady who was with you the first time you saw the battlement garden at Beaucaire, who ruined your life?"

"Beautiful lady — battlement garden? Good heavens, what extraordinary things we seem to have been thinking about each other: I with my man in England; you with your beautiful lady ——"

"She 's a different thing. You *talked* to me about her," I insisted. "Surely you must remember?"

"I remember the conversation perfectly. I did n't explain my meaning as a professor demonstrates a rule in higher mathematics, but I thought you could n't help understanding well enough, especially a vain little thing like you."

"I, vain? Oh!"

"You are, are n't you?"

"I — well, I 'm afraid I am, a little."

"You could never have looked in the glass if you were n't. Did n't you see, or guess, that I was talking about an Ideal whom I had conjured into being, as a desirable companion in that garden? I can 't understand from the way the conversation ran, how you could have helped it. When I first went to the battlement garden I was several years younger, steeped with the spirit of Provence and full of thoughts of Nicolete. I was just sentimental enough to imagine that such a girl as Nicolete was with me there, and always afterward I associated the vision of the Ideal with that garden. I said to myself, that I should like to come there again with that Ideal in the flesh. And then — then I did come again — with you."

"But you said — you thought of her always — that because you could n't have her — or something of the sort ——"

"Well, all that was no surprise to you, was it? You must have known perfectly well — ever since that night at Avignon when you let your hair down, anyhow, if not before, that I was trying desperately hard not to be an idiot about you — and not exactly radiant with joy in the thought that whoever the man was who would get you, it could n't be I?"

"O-oh!" I breathed a long, heavenly breath, that seemed to let all the sorrows and worries pour out of my heart, as the air rushed out of my lungs. "O-oh, you *can't* mean, truly and really, that you 're in love with Me, can you?"

"Surely it is n't news to you."

"I should think it was!" I exclaimed, rapturously. "Oh, I 'm *so* happy!"

"Another scalp — though a humble one?"

"Don't be a beast. I 'm so horribly in love with you, you know. It 's been hurting so *dreadfully.*"

Then I rather think he said "My darling!" but I 'm not quite sure, for I was so busy falling into his arms, and he was holding me so very, very tightly.

We stayed like that for a long time, not saying anything, and not even thinking, but feeling — feeling. And the couriers' dining-room was a princess's boudoir in an enchanted palace. The grease spots were stars and moons that had rolled out of heaven to see how two poor mortals looked when they were perfectly happy. Just a poor chauffeur and a motor maid: but the world was theirs.

CHAPTER XXXII

AFTER a while we talked again, and explained all the cross-purposes to each other, with the most interesting pauses in between the explanations. And Jack told me about himself, and Miss Paget.

It seems that her only sister was his mother, and she had been in love with his father before he met the sister. The father's name was Claud, and Jack was named after him. It was Miss Paget's favourite name, because of the man she had loved. But the first Claud was n't very lucky. He lost all his own money and most of his wife's, and died in South America, where he 'd gone in the hope of making more. Then the wife, Jack's mother, died too, while he was at Eton. After that Miss Paget's house was his home. Whenever he was extravagant at Oxford, as he was sometimes, she would pay his debts quite happily, and tell him that everything she had would be his some day, so he was not to bother about money. Accordingly, he did n't bother, but lived rather a lazy life — so he said — and enjoyed himself. A couple of years before I met him he got interested, through a friend, in a newly invented motor, which they both thought would be a wonderful success. Jack tried to get his aunt interested, too, but she did n't like the friend who had invented it — seemed jealous of Jack's affection for him — and refused to have anything to do with

the affair. Jack had gone so far, however, while taking her consent for granted, that he felt bound to go on; and when Miss Paget would have nothing to do with floating the new invention, Jack sold out the investments of his own little fortune (all that was left of his mother's money), putting everything at his friend's disposal. Miss Paget was disgusted with him for doing this, and when the motor would n't mote and the invention would n't float, she just said, "I told you so!"

It was at this time, Jack went on to tell me, that Miss Paget bought Beau. She had had another dog, given her by Jack, which died, and she collected Beau herself. Only a few days after Beau's arrival, Jack went down into the country to see his aunt and talk things over; for she had brought him up to expect to be her heir; and as she wanted him with her continually, as if he had been her son, she had objected to his taking up any profession. Now that he 'd lost his own money in this unfortunate speculation, he felt he ought to do something not to be dependent upon her, his income of two hundred a year having been sunk with the unfloatable motor invention. He meant to ask Miss Paget to lend him enough to go in as partner with another friend, who had a very thriving motor business, and to suggest paying her back so much a year. But everything was against him on that visit to his aunt's country house.

In the first place, she was in a very bad humour with him, because he had gone against her wishes, and she did n't want to hear anything more about motors or motor business. Then, there was Beau, as a *tertium quid.*

Beau had been bought from a dreadful man who had probably stolen, and certainly ill-treated him. The dog was very young, and owing to his late owner's cruelty, feared and hated the sight of a man. Since she had had him Miss Paget had done her very best to spoil the poor animal, encouraging him to growl at the men-servants, and laughing when he frightened away any male creature who had come about the place. While she and Jack were arguing over money and motors, who should stroll in but Beau, who at sight of a stranger — a man — closeted with his indulgent mistress, flew into a rage. He seized Jack by the trouser-leg and began to worry it, and Jack had to choke him before the dog would let go his grip.

The sight of this dreadful deed threw Miss Paget into hysterics. She shrieked that her nephew was cruel, ungrateful — that he had never loved her, that he cared only for her money, and now that he grudged her the affection of a dog with which *he* had had nothing to do; that the dog's dislike for him was a warning to her, and made her see him in his true light at last. "Go — go — out of my sight — or I 'll set my poor darling at you!" she cried, and Jack went, after saying several rather frank things.

At heart he was fond of his aunt, in spite of her eccentricities, and believed that she was of him, therefore he expected a letter of apology for her injustice and a request to come back. But no such letter ever arrived. Perhaps Miss Paget thought it was *his* place to apologize, and was waiting for him to do so. In any case, they had never seen each other again; and after a few weeks,

Jack received a formal note from his aunt's solicitor saying that, as she realized now he had "no real affection for her or *hers*" he need look for no future advantages from her, but was at liberty to take up any line of business he chose. Miss Paget would "no longer attempt to interfere with his wishes or direct his affairs."

This must have been a pleasant letter for a penniless young man, just robbed of all his future prospects. His own money gone, and no hope of any to put into a profession or business! Jack lived as he could for some months, trying for all sorts of positions, making a few guineas by sketches and motoring articles for newspapers, and somehow contriving to keep out of debt. He went to France to "write up" a great automobile race, as a special commission; but the paper which had given the commission — a new one devoted to the interests of motoring — suddenly failed. Jack found himself stranded; advertised for a position as chauffeur, and got it. There was the history which he "had n't inflicted on me before, lest I should be bored."

He was interested to hear of Miss Paget's journey to Italy, and knew all about the cousin who had died, leaving her money which she did n't need, and a castle in Italy which she did n't want. He laughed when I told him no harm, only a little fun — pretty girl — lady's-maids that "great nasty wet thing," which was the Channel: but nothing could hold his attention firmly except *our* affairs. For his affairs and my affairs were not separate any longer. They were joined together for weal or woe. Whatever happened, however imprudent the

step might be, he decided that we must be married. We loved each other; each was the other's world, and nothing must part us. Besides, said Jack, I needed a protector. I had no home, and he could not have me persecuted by creatures who produced Corn Plasters. His idea was to take me to England at once, and have me there promptly made Mrs. John Dane, by special licence. He had a few pounds, and a few things which he could sell would bring in a few more. Then, with me for an incentive, he should get something to do that was worth doing.

I said "Yes" to everything, and Jack darted away to converse with a nice man he had met in the garage, who had a motor, and was going to Paris almost immediately. If he had not gone yet, perhaps he would take us.

Luckily he had not gone, and he did take us. He took us to the Gare du Nord, where we would just have time to eat something, and catch the boat train for Calais. We should be in London in the morning, and Jack would apply for a special licence as early as possible.

I stood guarding our humble heap of luggage, while Jack spent his hard-earned sovereigns for our tickets, when suddenly I heard a voice which sounded vaguely familiar. It was broken with distress and excitement; still I felt sure I had heard it before, and turned quickly, exclaiming "Miss Paget!"

There she was, with a dressing bag in one hand, and a broken dog-leash in the other. Tears were running down her fat face (not so fat as it had been) under spectacles, and her false front was put on anyhow.

"Oh, my dear girl!" she wailed, without showing the slightest sign of astonishment at sight of me. "What a mercy you 've turned up, but it 's just like you. Have you seen my Beau anywhere?"

"No," I said, rather stiffly, for I could n't forgive her or her dog for their treatment of my Jack.

"Oh, dear, what shall I do!" she exclaimed. "He hates railway stations. You can't think the awful time we 've had since you left me in the train at Cannes. And now he 's broken his leash, and run away, and I can't speak any French, except to ask for hot water in Italian, and I don't see how I 'm going to find my darling again. They 'll snatch him up, to fling him into some terrible, murderous waggon, and take him to a lethal home, or whatever they call it. For heaven's sake, go and ask everybody where he is — and if you find him you can have anything on earth I 've got, especially my Italian castle which I can't sell. You can come to England with me and Beau, when you 've got him, and I 'll make you happy all the rest of your life. Oh, go — *do* go. I 'll look after your luggage."

"It 's half your own nephew's, Jack Dane's, luggage," said I, breathless and pulsing. "I 'm going to England with him, and *he 's* going to make me happy all the rest of my life, for we mean to be married, in spite of your cruelty which has made him poor, and turned him into a chauffeur. But — here he comes now. And — why, Miss Paget, there 's *Beau* walking with him, without any leash. Beau must remember him."

"Beau with Jack Dane!" gasped the old lady. "Jack Dane's found Beau? *Beau's* forgiven him! Then so

will I. You can both have the Italian castle — and everything that goes with it. And everything else that 's mine, too, except Beau."

"Hello, aunt, here 's your dog," said Jack.

Beau licked his foot.

THE END

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